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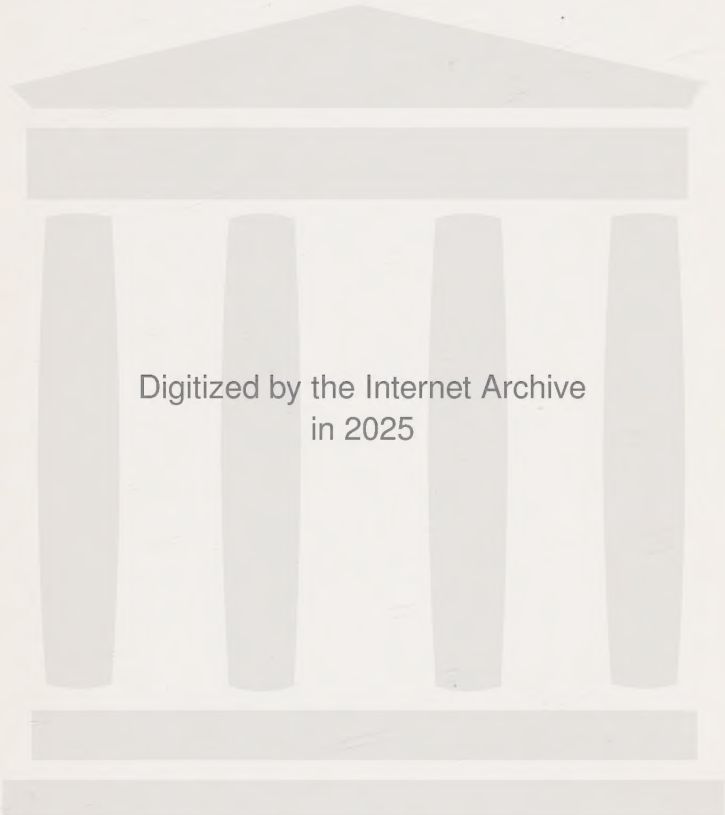
"Impressionism is a craze of such ephemeral character, as to be unworthy of serious consideration"

Sir W. P. Frith, R.A.

LANDMARKS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PAINTING

By the same Author

ART
SINCE CÉZANNE
POT-BOILERS
ON BRITISH FREEDOM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(*Photo: Archives du Louvre*)

Ingres. Mlle. Rivière

LANDMARKS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PAINTING

BY

CLIVE BELL

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PREFACE

THOUGH the greater part of this volume has appeared in the magazines—*The New Criterion*, *The Burlington*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Vogue*, to the editors of which I here, at once, give thanks—it would be inexact to say that I have made a book out of my articles. Rather I made articles out of my book. This is not to my credit ; on the contrary, it seems to suggest that I am grown so short-winded that 'the middle of about two thousand words' is the form in which I naturally express myself. It may be so ; at any rate certain it is that these articles were written deliberately to compose a book planned in advance. I wished to make a chart of Nineteenth-Century Painting from which the great figures should so emerge as to indicate the lie of the land. Between the Neo-Classical revival and the end of Impressionism lies one of the richest territories, and perhaps quite the strangest, in the world of painting. This territory I have surveyed in the spirit of an old-fashioned road-map maker, and have dealt, or tried to deal, with the road from David to Cézanne as one of those admirable topographers who flourished about the beginning of my period would have dealt with that from London to Dover. Like Messrs. Tombleson of Paternoster Row, while never forgetting

that my humble duty is to guide, I have allowed myself sometimes the pleasure of pointing out 'Wombwell Hall, the seat of Edmeads, Esq.,' or 'Sir H. Oxenden's at Broom.' As Mr. Water himself might have put it, I have sought to combine instruction with entertainment. I have indicated landmarks and gossiped about them.

The only way to appreciate perfectly a work of art is to see it as though it were the only thing of its sort in existence. To see it in relation to anything else is to see it impurely. I believe I am capable of looking at pictures purely and of so reacting to them; but assuredly I am not capable of making a tolerable book out of my reactions. Mr. Roger Fry can do that because he has a genius for holding his æsthetic emotion in suspense, analysing its object, and expressing the result in admirably lucid equivalents. To perform that feat one needs, I opine, in addition to various literary and philosophic acquirements, to be a painter. And a painter I am not. I may be capable of analysing my experience; certainly I am incapable of analysing professionally the object that provoked it. Wherefore very often I must be writing, not about particular works of art, but about artists. Them I have attempted to see in relation to other artists, in relation to movements, in relation even to their age. And

when matter appropriate to this my purpose has seemed inappropriate to a magazine article I have taken the liberty of subscribing it in notes: of notes I trust the reader will not deem me over-lavish.

If in this guide-book you find more about artists and artistic ideas than about particular works of art, I would not have you suppose on that account that my æsthetic theory has changed. It has not changed; and if I no longer feel so sure of it as I did, that is only because I no longer feel so sure of anything. Psychology, I am willing to believe, can throw new light on the nature of the æsthetic emotion, only to do so psychology must produce a psychologist who has had one. When Dr. Freud tells us that art is the externalization by the artist of his day-dreamings on wine, women, and motor cars, we perceive that Dr. Freud's notion of art is not ours. Very probably his account is correct of the sort of stuff he takes for art, but it will not do at all as an account of the stuff produced by Giotto and Shakespeare, Milton and Cézanne. To analyse or describe the æsthetic emotion the philosopher must have experienced it. My great-uncle, John Bell — a philosopher who raised two questions '*Whence comes Man?*' and '*Why does Man exist?*' and answered both to his own satisfaction—used to maintain that the only sort

of music an honest man could enjoy was a simple tune, and that all who pretended to get pleasure from symphonies and suchlike were frauds. But great-uncle John never convinced me, and neither does Mr. Ivor Richards.

I have so much respect for that gentleman's intellect and erudition that when I heard he had published a book on Æsthetics (*Principles of Literary Criticism*: Kegan Paul) I sent for it at once. And when I found that he had nothing but hard words for me and my notions, I was considerably dashed—until I discovered that we were talking about two different things, that I was talking about my experience and that he was talking about his. I cheered up then, for I perceived that I was arguing about what I felt for pictures with an infinitely intelligent and cultivated gentleman who had the misfortune to be blind: so naturally I got the worst of it. Lacking æsthetic experience, Mr. Richards had to lean, and to lean rather heavily, on his erudition and the dogmas of his science. 'Mr. Clive Bell,' said he, 'used to maintain the existence of an unique emotion, æsthetic emotion. . . . But psychology has no place for such an entity.' How unlucky for psychology! If one of Mr. Richards' fellow-dons were to tell Einstein—to compare great things with small—that the Universe had no place for Time-Space, I wonder what Einstein

would say. 'What Universe?' perhaps. Anyhow, though Mr. Richards' conception of psychology has no place for a pure æsthetic emotion, does that quite prove that no such emotion can exist? Might it not prove that Mr. Richards has never had one?

Having parcelled out experience into a number of neat little plots into none of which mine will fit, the lecturer in English at Magdalene College, Cambridge—for Mr. Richards is nothing less (*vide Principles of Literary Criticism*, title page)—very legitimately concludes that mine does not exist. As for my humble plea, that if it did 'this would be no queerer than anything else in this incredibly queer universe,' the lecturer has a crushing retort for that—'The queerness of the Universe,' says he, 'is of a different and more interesting sort.' I do wonder how Mr. Richards comes to know so much about the Universe. In this matter of 'the uniqueness of the æsthetic experience' I have at any rate the late Professor Bradley on my side: 'The nature of a work of art'—he says on page 5 of his Oxford lectures on poetry—'is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but a world in itself, independent, complete, autonomous,' and don for don I take leave to prefer the Oxford one.

If psychologists are to throw any helpful

light on æsthetics—and I believe they can throw much—they must abandon this habit of forcing all nature to submit to a hypothesis—a hypothesis, be it said in passing, based on quite inadequate data. It is not in the great scientific tradition, nor, I may add, in the Cambridge, to ignore awkward facts. Might I, without impertinence, suggest that Mr. Richards should give Freud a rest and turn to Darwin—for a method I mean? Might a mere æsthete in search of light beseech psychologists, instead of denying facts that make against their theories, to increase their stock? For only when they have collected the facts of æsthetic experience can they hope to generalize helpfully; only when sensibility has provided the data will their massive intellects have something to work on. Already I had them, the psychologists, in mind when, in 1913, I wrote: 'He who would elaborate a plausible theory of æsthetics must possess two qualities—artistic sensibility and a turn for clear thinking.' Had I foreseen Dr. Freud perhaps I should have added 'and a modicum of humility to boot.'

Meanwhile, in this little book, which is intended to be as instructive as is compatible with being amusing, there will be found, I hope, nothing to offend orthodox or unorthodox psychologists. My ambition would be rather to persuade them, to persuade psycho-analysts

even, that just conceivably there may be things in heaven and earth, which, inevitably dreamt of in their philosophy, have nevertheless escaped their waking attention.

CLIVE BELL.

CHARLESTON, *October* 3, 1926.

CONTENTS

Prolegomena	*Page* 1
The Greeks and the Romans	22
The English	32
Géricault	43
Delacroix	54
Romanticism in 1830	63
Syncretism	72
Barbizon	81
The Two Corots	89
The Anonymous Master	98
The Pre-Raphaelites	107
Daumier	118
The Realist	126
Turner	136
The Death of Ingres	145
The Mystery of Manet	162
The Rediscovery of Paganism	174
The Two Impressionisms	185
Seurat and Divisionism	195
The End of Impressionism	205

ILLUSTRATIONS

Ingres.	Mlle. Rivière	*Frontispiece*
David.	Les Sabines	*To face page* 22
Constable.	The Cornfield	32
Géricault.	Le Marché aux Bœufs	43
Delacroix.	Le Massacre de Scio	54
Delacroix.	Juillet 28, 1830	63
Chassériau.	La Paix	72
Millet.	Les Glaneuses	81
Corot.	L'Atelier	89
Guys.	Drawing	98
Burne-Jones.	The Golden Stairs	107
Daumier.	Parade	118
Courbet.	L'Atelier du peintre	126
Turner.	Rain, Steam and speed	136
Ingres.	Thétis et Jupiter	145
Manet.	Le déjeuner sur l'herbe	162
Renoir.	Les Baigneuses	174
Degas.	Les Blanchisseuses	185
Seurat.	Chahut	195
Monet.	St. Lazare	205

PROLEGOMENA

THE history of painting in the nineteenth century presents itself to most people, I suppose, as a series of biographies, as a succession of prodigiously gifted artists each of whom has to fight his way through a jungle of prejudice and insensibility. Such a presentation is true enough, and, what in the opinion of modern philosophers is of far greater consequence, convenient. It fits neatly into that larger picture of an agelong struggle between the gifted individual and the stupid mass, and pleases by showing arrayed against Constable, Delacroix, Corot, Courbet, Manet, Renoir and Cézanne those very flocks and herds which butted down or got in the way of Shelley and Wordsworth, Galileo and Brunelleschi, Friar Bacon and Socrates. Yet, though we may fit our reflections on this particular age into sweeping and satisfying generalizations, unless we realize that the nineteenth-century herd was not homogeneous but a combination of two very different flocks—the respectably futile conservatives and the vulgar but highly successful would-be chromo-photographers—we shall fail to see the great artists in their true and peculiar setting, and so misunderstand the history of nineteenth-century painting.

No doubt the oddest thing about the nineteenth century—about its æsthetic history, I

mean—is that it produced so extraordinary a number of great painters. Next in order of oddness, and not far off either, comes the fact that, in its second half, official painting, perhaps for the first time on record, certainly for the first time since Roman days, had nothing whatever to do with art. This was the Victorian revolution. And this revolution, with which—to make my meaning clear from the outset—I associate the names of Landseer, Horsley, Hook, Herkomer, Stanhope Forbes, Marcus Stone, Luke Fildes, John Collier and Seymour Lucas in England, Horace Vernet, Paul Delaroche, Meissonier, Cabanel, Robert-Fleury, Merle, Bonnat and Bouguereau in France, is, I imagine, a thing unique in history. The movement is now dead, or in the throes of death: directly, it could have no influence on art with which it had no direct connection; indirectly, however, its influence has been considerable; while, in itself, not as an artistic but as a social manifestation, it is highly symptomatic of that disease which seized upon Europe in the nineteenth century and has left us in the twentieth what we are.

The fact that in England the artificers of this revolution and their descendants, the would-be and worsted chromo-photographers, captured the Royal Academy and there pullulated, has led to a strange misnomer and much confusion. Because they were fellows and associates of the

Royal Academy these Victorian Jack Cades came to be called academic. No adjective could have suited them worse. The true academic painters —the Baudrys and Wattses, the Cogniets, Coutures and Héberts, the Legros, the Leightons even, and all the children and grandchildren of David—composed that insignificant but not utterly disreputable flock which, as a rule, joined with the vast and vulgar herd to thwart and insult original artists as they struggled into the open. In normal times these conventionally academic people would have formed the official gang which traditionally leads popular prejudice in defence of vested interests. That they had been ousted from this coveted position to a place of subservience was a result of Victorianism. Therein lay the revolution. Let us see, if we can, how it came about.

The standard of painting goes up and down for reasons which are probably undiscoverable and about which it is therefore agreeable to speculate ; but never—never at any rate since Roman times—until the middle of the nineteenth century did recognized and reputed painters, the men at the head of their profession, entirely lose touch with art. Up till then every professional painter knew that art and pictography (to use a bastard word for a bad business) were two different things : and the general public had to take it from them that it was so.

I do not wish here to reopen the vexed question of representation. I wish merely to remind you of a fact which no one denies—that, before the Victorian revolution, every painter, no matter how literal, felt that to represent accurately was not enough. The official portrait of the kind with which Herkomer and Collier have familiarized us was unknown: the landscape that is merely 'truthful,' the anecdote that is merely 'lifelike,' were undreamed of. Even the Dutch, who went farthest in the Victorian direction, and to whom, as we shall see, the Victorians returned for a tip or two, never imagined that one could cease altogether to bother about such things as quality and composition.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there was a tradition of painting with which every one who ever enters a gallery or museum is familiar and of which I am no extravagant admirer. Painting had then become, largely for social reasons think the historians, highly representative. But no one imagines that Reynolds, Gainsborough and Greuze had no other end in view than to represent the model exactly. No one doubts that they conceived of a picture as something having a significance of its own, independent of whatever in life it might happen to portray. In the eighteenth century no one doubted that a picture must be satisfactory as a work of art besides being truthful or agreeable

or what not as a representation. In England this eighteenth-century tradition lingered on into the nineteenth; in France its place was taken by Neo-Classicism. One cannot say much for Lawrence and Downman, one can say even less for Northcote, Fuseli and Benjamin West, the Davidians are become a byword for cold dreariness, but this one can say for them all—they still realized that a picture should be, to some extent at any rate, a work of art, and they realized that neither accuracy of representation nor interest of subject are sufficient means to that end. They still felt the necessity for style.

Early in the nineteenth century this genuine tradition of painting underwent one of those modifications which are the sure and only sign that a tradition is alive and in health: Géricault and then Delacroix were the new influences in France; in England the innovator was Constable. From these points of departure you can trace the whole glorious history of modern art—Chassériau, Daumier, Corot, Courbet, Turner, Manet, Renoir, and so on through Cézanne to Matisse and Picasso. With the names of these masters and their associates the history of art in the nineteenth century is concerned. Behind them, as a background, you would expect to find the academic painters: the men who accepted the discoveries of the modern masters as soon as

those discoveries had become sufficiently desiccated and antiseptic to be harmless and useless; the men who had a genuine liking for old masters and took a genuine interest in their technical processes; the men who were not without scholarship nor quite without taste; the men who cared for art but happened not to be artists. And you do find them; but not as the background, only as an incident in the background. The background is one of those realistic 'drops' which Victorian playgoers will not yet have forgotten and will not easily forget. How should anything so grey and dingy as an academic tradition tell amidst the riotous realism of that nineteenth-century *décor*, amidst those tremendous 'cloths' and 'flies' and transformation scenery? Why, they made almost invisible the very protagonists—the genuine artists, I mean.

Yet an academic tradition tottered on, supporting itself on the early nineteenth century, and stimulating itself to occasional and half-hearted efforts by the uninspired worship now of one bygone period now of another. The uninspired worship of all that was mortal in the Venetians produced an Etty, a Baudry or a Watts; of what was unessential in the Primitives a Burne-Jones; of the superficial decorative side of the great Spaniards a Ribot now, and now a Carolus Duran; of all that ever was in a high-

class museum an Alphonse Legros, or in a high-class library a Gustave Moreau. Genuine academic painters are never wholly contemptible, because, though they are not artists themselves (it is a mistake to suppose that Raphael, Poussin and Ingres were academic when they were laying the foundations of future academies), though they dare not touch living art, or rather dare stroke it only when it has grown toothless and tame, yet they respect art and believe in it. The survival of academicism throughout the nineteenth century is something to be thankful for. It is pleasant to remember that even in those dark days there existed feebly a tradition to denounce each great artist as he arose, not in the name of morality, religion, patriotism, the paternal roof, the marriage bed or the social order, but generally in the names of Raphael, Michelangelo and Titian, and particularly in the name of his previously denounced predecessor : to denounce Corot in the name of Delacroix, Renoir in the name of Corot, Matisse in the name of Renoir, and so on. Such scholarly criticism must have been quite unintelligible to the uneducated upstarts who, from Burlington House, were ruling the roost in England, and in France were, if not quite masters in the *Beaux-Arts*, at any rate the popular idols of the *salon*. Nevertheless, unintelligible and superfluous though it must have seemed to the triumphant

chromo-photographers—who could see very well that a picture by Corot or Renoir was not 'lifelike,' and equally well knew that that settled it—academic criticism was condescendingly encouraged. Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema and Prof. Herkomer were glad to hear that Mr. Burne-Jones—'queer, artistic sort of chap, don't you know'—disapproved of Impressionism. Any stick is good enough to beat a live artist with.

Since Victorian chromo-photography has nothing to do with art, there is no reason why it should cumber the pages of any book on that subject. Only, before writing or reading a history of painting in the nineteenth century, it is important to get clear in our minds precisely what this strange business, this Victorian substitute, was. That accomplished, we can make one large bonfire in the corner by the pig-sty and have done with it for ever. An eminent exponent of the trade, a royal academician and man of noble birth, has categorically laid down the Victorian doctrine: 'The art of painting'—says he—'consists in representing accurately three dimensional forms in a two dimensional space.' In my opinion he does less than justice to the trade; and I would add, by way of amendment, the words 'in such a way as to make them acceptable to the public.' The Dutch *genre* painters had come pretty near this; only they

added 'in such a way as not wholly to ignore the claims of art.' To representation they added a certain preoccupation with style. The eminent Victorians could not be bothered with style: indeed, they had not the least idea what it was. But to representation they added, to make it more palatable, a sauce of anecdote or sentiment. With the aid of these ingredients, which they reckoned pre-eminently artistic, they hoped to produce something which would beat the camera at its own game: they hoped to make pictures which should be as 'lifelike' as coloured photographs while possessing the additional charm of telling a tale, pointing a moral, cracking a joke, or touching a tender chord. For a moment they looked like winning. Alma Tadema could get ten thousand pounds for his notion of Nero fiddling while Rome was a-burning, and Sir John Everett Millais not much less for a vision of spring shopping at Whiteley's. For a moment the match was equal and the struggle intense. Then, with the perfection of photographic apparatus, with the picture papers and the cinema, the machine drove the Royal Academy clean off the field.

How did it all begin? The question is neither easy nor important to answer. But, patriotically, I give it as my opinion that this essentially industrial business started in England. In the anecdotic pictures of Mulready and Leslie,

painted round about 1830, one seems to get for the first time a complete abandonment of artistic intention. Perhaps in these even there still lingered some vestige of a tradition, not of art to be sure, but of painting; but by 1850, with Landseer, C. W. Cope and Webster working at full blast, all such adventitious hindrances had been blown away. Nothing now was allowed to come between the picture-maker and his public. That public wanted a nice coloured story to make it laugh or cry. And it got *Dignity and Impudence*. The course was clear for Millais' *Boyhood of Raleigh*, Sir Luke Fildes' *Doctor*, and the Hon. John Collier's *Death Sentence*. By this time all connection with art is lost entirely: and the only school of painting to which there is any reference is the Dutch, from which the earlier Victorians picked up certain tricks 'for getting things like' which they were by no means clever enough to invent for themselves. If England was first in the field with pictorial anecdotage, as I firmly believe she was with the penny-in-the-slot machines also, the rest of Europe followed hard on her heels.[1] But I have no notion of pursuing the new industry to admire its efflorescence beyond the shores of my own country.

[1] A patriotic American gentleman assures me that I am quite wrong about the 'automatics,' so perhaps I am wrong about Victorian painting too. I cannot believe, however, that it comes from Boston; though the 'automatics' may have come from Alexandria.

And why did they do it? That again is a hard question. One thing is clear: until the early middle of the nineteenth century they would never have been allowed to do it. Till then, patrons insisted on getting something that anyhow looked like art for their money. The aristocratic tradition of the eighteenth century would have felt unerringly that something was wrong had it been offered no modicum of style. No class with a tradition of culture could have accepted anything so aggressively undistinguished as Victorian painting. But the new patrons were the new rich thrown up by the industrial revolution and the war. They liked anecdotes and jokes and sentimentality and moralizing; and manifestly they were never going to put the least pressure on any painter who chose to throw artistic decency to the winds. Clearly, from such patrons would come no call to painters to bother about art.

Now, in 1829, Niepce and Daguerre discovered the process of photography. No active-minded painter can have been quite indifferent to so startling an invention; neither can any genuine artist have seen in it a potential rival. But to a professional painter who was hardly an artist at all this new process may well have appeared by no means remote from his own calling. What such a one may have felt can perhaps be inferred from what a wide-awake Japanese, Shiba

Kokan, a pupil of Harunobu, had to say, many years later, when first he heard of the camera. 'In occidental art'—says the Japanese gentleman—'objects are copied directly from nature, hence before a landscape one feels as if one were placed in the midst of nature. There is a wonderful apparatus called the photograph, which gives a facsimile copy of the object, whatever it is, to which it is directed. Nothing which has not actually been seen is sketched, nor is a nameless landscape reproduced, as we often see done in Chinese productions. . . . A painting which is not a faithful copy of nature has neither beauty nor is worthy of the name.'[1] One can easily imagine this sort of thing being said, about 1840, in the lower-class studios by one hack painter to another; still more easily can one imagine it being said by business men and critics. Ruskin early got hold of the notion that a 'truthful' picture has a peculiar moral excellence. And morals counted for much in the reign of Queen Victoria, and the camera, as every one knows, cannot lie. 'Well,' the Victorian painters may have said, 'so here is truth—scientific truth: let us see if we cannot do as well, adding what the camera cannot give—sentiment. We will give photographic representation flavoured with sentiment. That is art. Come, buy our pictures

[1] *Confessions of Shiba Kokan*: quoted by Mr. Laurence Binyon in *The Flight of the Dragon* (Murray, 1911).

and you will pay homage at once to Science and Sentiment.' The public paid it to the tune of ten thousand a canvas.

If I am right in supposing that the camera was one of the causes of the Victorian *débâcle*, destroying the men who would have been honest academic painters, or rather converting them into mere pictorial chatterboxes, an amusing footnote is added to a theory which I have sketched elsewhere. In an essay on Negro sculpture [1] I suggested that the gap between art and life has for a century been growing wider and wider because those intermediate activities, half artistic and half useful, those impure arts which lean heavily on life, have been steadily devoured by the machine. The pure, self-conscious, self-critical artist, I argued, concerned solely with expressing himself through form, perceives intellectually or feels instinctively that the machine's activities and his have, and can have, nothing in common. Of him whose sole business it is to express himself through form, a machine can by no means be a rival. Machinery has just as little, or as much, to do with pure art as it has to do with love or religion; artists, lovers and mystics may or may not find motor-cars and telephones useful: there the matter ends.

Because he is engaged on a task which no

[1] *Since Cézanne* (Chatto and Windus).

machine can in the nature of things attempt, and because his achievement appeals solely to æsthetic sensibility, the artist—the pure artist—remains untouched. Not so the impure artist, the craftsman, the maker of utensils. His duty is double: to make a useful thing and leave on it the mark of a temperament. Indirectly only does he appeal to the æsthetic sense; he appeals to it through a sense of serviceableness. The craftsman is—or should I say 'was'?—half an artist because he leaves on the useful commodity he is paid to produce the mark of a creator. But the essence of good craftsmanship is that the craftsman should be an artisan first and an artist more or less by accident. The craftsman must be primarily conscious of the practical, not the æsthetic, purpose which his product is to serve. He is a maker of useful things, a manufacturer; and as a manufacturer he has had for the last hundred years the machine as a constant and increasingly successful rival. What is more, mechanical, rather than æsthetic, perfection has ever been the craftsman's conscious ideal. Whatever he may have been doing unconsciously, consciously the craftsman has been aiming always at finish and precision. With the development of modern machinery that ideal has been realized—by the machine. With my own eyes have I seen a Wiltshire peasant

whittling beautifully, in the true spirit of an instinctive, unconscious artist, a handle to his hoe, and coveting all the while the machine-made article hanging beyond his reach in the village shop. Had he been a better craftsman he would have come nearer his own ideal and fallen farther from that of the artist.

So, when the potter, the smith and the weaver saw machinery producing their wares more accurately and more showily than they had been able to produce them, their first instinctive reaction was to go one better in the same direction. Throughout the nineteenth century they followed the machine in unequal emulation. The game was bound to be a losing one ; for in producing with scientific precision ostentatiously decorated articles obviously a man is no match for a machine. The factory-made article was more exactly finished, more expensive-looking, and far cheaper than anything the craftsman could offer. The game was lost. While the pure, conscious artist—the Corot or Courbet or Renoir—confronted with a photograph, could say, or at any rate feel, ' What I am trying for has nothing to do with this,' the semi-conscious semi-artist, the craftsman, could only confess in despair that he was beaten at his own game, or rather what seemed to him his own game. He could not understand, and it would have made very little

practical difference had he understood, that he was trying to do two things—make useful objects, and express himself through them—and that the machine had beaten him only at the first. Inevitably he allowed himself to become the machine's rival, attempted to follow it in its bewildering precisions and perfections, and followed it to his own undoing and the infinite impoverishment of human existence.

Of the economic pressure, the pressure of competition and cut prices, which I am assured must in any case have squeezed the craftsman out of society, I say nothing, because psychological and æsthetic motives, which I am better qualified to appreciate, suffice of themselves to account for the degradation of the applied arts. Whatever Governments might have done by way of subsidy and spoon-feeding, with the perfection of machinery the crafts were doomed. That semi-conscious semi-artist, which is the genuine craftsman, could never have gone on producing useful things which were also works of art—could never have gone on doing what he was doing still as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century—with the unspeakable perfection of the machine-made article challenging him at every turn. His ideal, the only one that is of which he was distinctly conscious, having been realized, he had no genuine function, no real place, in the new world. And if he survive

under industrialism at all he will survive only as a souvenir or a curiosity.

The case of the pure artist is entirely different. His sole business being to create expressive forms, his appeal being made solely to the æsthetic sense, with practical life he has nothing to do whatever. He lives and moves in a world of mind and spirit where the word 'useful' is unknown, or, if known, applied only to that which promotes directly fine thinking and intense feeling. He is immune from irrelevant influences because, hidden somewhere, generally in some remote part of his being, is a critical intelligence which reminds him that shop finish, expensive-lookingness, and lifelike representation have nothing to do with what he is about. What he is about is the creation of expressive form, and the machine has nothing to express and cannot create ; it can only produce. So, throughout the nineteenth century, amidst the ruin of the applied and impure arts, the pure art of painting flourished amazingly. Simultaneously, the painters who were only semi-artists, the agreeable topographers, the poor man's portraitists, the dull but decent producers of pictures for gentlemen's houses, in a word the impure painters, disappeared almost ; and the Victorian illusionists—the photographers without cameras—flourished in their stead. The masters of art remained untouched, while the

undercurrent of painting dwindled to a trickle. The inference is obvious. Great artists had nothing to fear from the camera because they had nothing to do with the craft of likeness-catching; but the craftsmen of painting suffered the fate of their fellow-craftsmen because they had allowed themselves to be persuaded that catching a likeness was an important—nay, an essential—part of their trade. At the end of the fifteenth century the invention of photography might have had less effect. Then, as in the nineteenth, there were plenty of craftsmen-painters, but the craftsmen were not expected to bother overmuch about catching likenesses. Nevertheless, because craftsmen, unlike artists, work deliberately and unreservedly to please their patrons, and because patrons inevitably hanker after verisimilitude and shop finish, in any age the invention of the camera must have had serious consequences for the craftsmen of painting. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was bound to be fatal. Here was a likeness-catching machine challenging the painter-craftsman. The challenge was accepted: with what results let the Tate and Luxembourg show.

So, in a nineteenth-century *salon* or general exhibition, one might have found a few masterpieces by the great living artists amidst a jungle of trash from which all trace of art had been

banished. In the *Salon d'automne*, on the other hand, or in *The London Group* show, the standard of painting is surprisingly high. Whether or no the masterpieces are there is a matter of opinion and to some extent of chance; the significant and indisputable fact is that even the third- and fourth-rate men are now trying to paint pictures. In no reputable society is any one any longer trying to rival the camera. If the hypothesis which I advanced as helping to explain the nineteenth-century collapse be valid, it should throw some light on the twentieth-century recovery. And I think it does. Notoriously the first effect of what is called the Post-Impressionist movement—the movement which began with the discovery of Cézanne and ended in Cubism—was to make painters self-conscious. And self-consciousness brought them face to face with a fact which most of the minor men seemed to have forgotten—that they were either artists or cumberers of the earth. With cinemas and illustrated papers within the reach of all, to paint pictures which had no artistic intention was manifestly a waste of time and energy. If they were artists they must be creators not producers, serving some other end than the satisfaction of a demand. This newly aroused self-consciousness raised in a new form the eternal problems of æsthetics. What is art? Why do we feel it to be so important? Clearly,

if it were something which leaned so helplessly on life that it had to be propped up by contemporary civilization, it would be of no importance whatever. Art changes, no doubt ; but its changes are conditioned mainly by its own nature ; only incidentally and superficially is it modified by social and political developments. In a world of outrageous variables art is relatively constant. The artist *qua* artist is nearer to all the artists that ever lived than to all the inhabitants of his native town. To paint in a particular way because Giotto painted in that way may be unenterprising, it is not absurd ; to paint in a particular way because one's fellow-citizens expect one to paint in that way is abdication. Painting is not a trade ; and Post-Impressionism made every painter who was in the least an artist intensely conscious of his vocation.

Either the artist is concerned with something outside of and above contemporary life or he is nothing. That grasped, the struggle with the machine came abruptly to an end. The second-rate painter no longer aspired to be as good a likeness-getter as a photographer. He was proud to appear for what he was, a decent second-rate artist. He did what his fellows in the applied arts could not do, detached himself from the spirit of a commercial age, insisted on his individual significance, and recognized that

his kingdom was not of this world. Art cannot march with humanity, progress, democracy or industrialism ; it is tied to its own peculiar and perpetual problems. Art cannot come to the people : the people must come to art, or leave it alone. Having grasped that truth, painters found no difficulty in setting flowing again that broad stream of tradition on which to-day float the great original geniuses. Whatever contemporary masters may lack, they do not lack a background. There is plenty of good painting nowadays and there are one or two great artists : chromo-photography has been banished to the slums where a class-conscious proletariat and the royal family may or may not enjoy it. That the next generation of painters will be content to remain as haughtily aloof from life as the last seems improbable ; that it will make the Victorian mistake of allowing machinery to impose an ideal is unthinkable. Not for many years are we likely to see repeating itself the Victorian paradox of great artists and brilliant but tiny groups isolated in a wilderness from which painting has been banished. The tradition is awake again and vigorous, ready to give and to take ; but what new twist the next generation will give it I cannot imagine.

THE GREEKS AND THE ROMANS

'QUI nous délivrera des Grecs et des Romains?' Incidentally, the Greeks and Romans were German; but the Romantics, when they cried aloud against the crushing tyranny of the school, did not realize that, nor if they had, would it greatly have strengthened their case—to give a dog that particular bad name not being in those days to hang him. The neo-classical business was begun by Winckelmann in the middle of the eighteenth century. Winckelmann's notion of Greek art was derived mainly from late Roman copies, also it was coloured by the taste of a German archæologist. Nevertheless, it was to Winckelmann's notion that David was converted; and it was Winckelmann's *beau idéal* which by David through the Convention and Napoleon was imposed on the greater part of Europe. To understand the history of modern painting one has got to understand what that ideal was; partly because in a weak solution it has persisted to this day as the academic conception of classical art, still more because the overbearing brutality with which it was imposed helped to provoke that pugnacious individualism which has been the most conspicuous characteristic of the nineteenth century.

David, like Winckelmann, was a forceful pedant: he was also a very good, though perhaps

(*Photo : Archives du Louvre*)

David. Les Sabines

not quite a great, painter. He started as a capable student in the school of Vien; went in 1775 to Rome, and was there converted to Neo-Classicism; and, at the age of forty-one, endowed as he was with a fair share of envy and malice, threw himself into the revolutionary movement as a red-hot iconoclast. The Bastille, that fortress of political prejudice, had fallen. Was not the Academy the fortress of artistic prejudice? No journalist will be disposed to challenge so helpful an analogy; and by 1793 France was given over to journalists. Jacques Louis David, deputy for Paris, demanded the suppression of the Academy, and became, his moral gesture having realized itself—as gestures had a way of doing in those days—the pope of painting.

That the laws promulgated by David were not very well suited to that art appears no matter for surprise when we consider that they were based on sculpture and politics. Subject should when possible be drawn from classical history or mythology, but, whencesoever drawn, it should be treated as though it were a piece of Græco-Roman sculpture—copying the antique, or plaster casts of the antique being the highest exercise of creative power: the human form is the only proper study of artists, it should be nude or, at worst, draped heroically, and bounded by a sharp, insensitive line, so as to look, as far as possible, as though it

had been cut out of some hard material: the habit of using colours is to be regretted, they should be applied in a flat, metallic, inconspicuous fashion, so as to give a picture, so far as possible, the air of a group of statuary or of a bas-relief: but, as classical sculpture is at its noblest in single figures, the figures in pictures should be kept severely apart (no matter for composition), and design in depth should be reduced to a minimum: lastly, the whole must be calculated to express and promote those moral ideas which are the peculiar joy of free citizens in an enlightened republic.

David was far too much of a painter to practise invariably what he preached. In his portraits especially, which consistency obliged him to treat as mere parerga, he continued throughout life to give proof of admirable painter-like qualities: by his portraits he is most gloriously remembered.[1] It was left to the little Davidians

[1] Instead, however, of reproducing a portrait, or the Marat, or the pretty Joseph Bara even, I have chosen *The Sabine Women*. This I have done because *The Sabine Women* is a highly characteristic picture which illustrates my argument; and it is my plan, whenever the choice is forced on me, to choose always a picture which illustrates my text rather than the one which does most credit to the master. In consequence, the reader, as he turns these pages, will meet a good many pictures with which he is familiar, and none perhaps which will take him quite by surprise. I beseech him to remember that they are here, not to give him a thrill, but to bear out my words.

—Abel de Pujol, Blondel, Gautherot,[1] etc., etc. —to apply the doctrine unflinchingly and so exacerbate a war which ended in nineteenth-century liberty. For, of his eminent contemporaries, though all came under his sway—how should they have done otherwise when there was but one Emperor, and David was his painter ?[2]—it is to be remembered that Prud'hon—who for all his originality was of the school—was by temperament too sensitive and too sentimental to be thoroughly Roman,[3] and Gros too coarse and soldierly to be at all Greek ; while Ingres, the greatest of them all, was never a true Davidian. Ingres, who died more than forty years after the founder, though reckoned from about 1830 his successor as chief of the school, was a painter of quite another order. By the exquisite delicacy and expressiveness of his line he joins hands with Raphael rather than with imperial Rome ; by taste and

[1] Gautherot must have taken the master's injunctions deeply to heart to have exhibited in 1827 a picture entitled *Venus vaccinated by Esculapius.*

[2] Madame de Rémusat records that Napoleon on leaving David's studio, after admiring his picture of the Coronation, took off his hat to the master. (*Madame de Rémusat*, iii. 335.)

[3] Of Prud'hon it would, perhaps, be truest to say that he is in the school without being of it. He was influenced by David, but only in unessentials : he owes nothing to Winckelmann. He was an eighteenth-century sentimentalist who accepted the consular and imperial conception of life without accepting completely the theory of art.

intelligence he is of a different world from that in which the citizen David looked big. Only in his doctrine—his narrow and indefatigable insistence on line—his choice of subjects, and his contemptuous maltreatment of colour, does he resemble the sea-green incorruptible of painting.[1] In fact Ingres is not even supposed to have accepted the Davidian dispensation till 1812 at earliest—till after the master's death, in 1825, say some. Previously, in Italy, he had studied attentively fifteenth-century painting, and had been called 'gothic' for his pains. In Italy it must have been that he perfected that supreme gift of his—the art of expressing the content of a form, not by little distracting details within the form, but by a single bounding line. Herein he is the direct descendant of the Florentines and of Raphael; herein lies his immense superiority to David. Both Ingres and David have come into fashion during the last twenty-five years with the movement towards abstract art. Both are abstract, but in very different ways. Ingres, like Picasso, empties objects of almost all significance save the purely æsthetic, and constructs works of art out of the intrinsic beauty of forms; David, also, reduces natural objects to abstractions, but with these abstractions he attempts to express ideas—moral ideas. Ingres is plastic, David declama-

[1] 'La couleur partie animale de l'art' (Ingres).

tory; and clearly David never felt sure that Ingres was orthodox. When, in 1816, the old regicide was banished, it was for Gros, not Ingres (who was still in Italy by the way), that he sent. It was Gros he adjured to abandon military subjects (his forte) and keep alive the pure flame by painting exclusively in the high Roman fashion. The faithful Baron heard and trembled, tried, failed, and threw himself into the river.[1]

With decency it can hardly be said that the neo-classical school died before the death of Ingres in 1867; by extreme courtesy it may be presumed to exist still as the basis of the French academic school, in so far as that school can be said to have any basis or can be said to exist even. Its heyday, however, closed with the Empire, as was to be expected. There was always something political about Davidism. David had expressed or had seemed to express, by accident perhaps, the reforming and mildly puritanical fancies which were afloat before '89 and made possible the Revolution. Under the Republic he set himself deliberately to glorify the democracy, letting it be understood that outside his rule there was no artistic safety—nor much personal for that matter. To the jury of 1793 he added five politicians of unimpeach-

[1] How conscientiously he tried may be inferred from the titles of his pictures, e.g. *Hercule tuant Rhésus, et faisant manger le cadavre de ses ennemis par ses chevaux.*

able sentiments, besides a gardener, a peasant, and a cobbler. He designed a complete democratic outfit—'approprié aux mœurs républicaines et au caractère de la Révolution'—to be substituted by decree for the coat and breeches of slavery.[1] He organized the fête of the Supreme Being and the fête of Regeneration, in which, he says,

> 'On verra le maire avec son écharpe à côté du bûcheron ou du maçon ; le noir Africain, qui ne diffère que par couleur, marchera à côté du blanc européen ; les intéressants élèves de l'institution des Aveugles, traînés sur un plateau roulant, offriront le spectacle touchant du *malheur honoré*. Vous y serez aussi, tendres nourrissons de la maison des Enfants-Trouvés, portés dans de blanches bercelonnettes ; vous commencerez à jouir de vos droits civils trop justement recouvrés.

While—

> '. . . des milliers d'oiseaux, rendus à la liberté, portant à leur col de légères banderolles, prendront leur vol rapide dans les airs et porteront au ciel le témoignage de la liberté rendue à la terre.'

[1] David designed all sorts of costumes fit for the heirs of Greece and Rome ; but in the application of his ideas he was consistently unlucky. Thus Norvins remembers seeing in the great 'Carnaval gréco-romain, sur le Pont Royal, par un temps affreux, des élèves du peintre David vêtus complètement à la manière des élèves d'Apelle, tête nue, jambes nues, chaussés d'un cothurne, et n'ayant d'autre vêtement même nécessaire que les plis ondoyants d'une double tunique.' 'Les passants leur offraient des parapluies,' adds Vandal, on what authority I know not.

But David was not a politician for nothing; and he found it wonderfully easy to transfer his enthusiasm from the Supreme Being and the democracy to the Emperor and the rites of the Church. After all, the Romans were not only republicans, but warriors too. The dictatorship of the proletariat and the personal rule of General Bonaparte came to much the same thing, after all. The pedant, who, noticing that in classical sculpture horses are ridden without bridle or bit, and ignoring the fact that in classical sculpture bridles and bits were made of metal which has perished, had proclaimed that henceforth no true artist would condescend to paint such unclassical frippery as the reins of a General's charger, found it quite possible in 1805 to paint in minutest detail the costumes and accoutrements of *Le Sacre*. David became the imperial painter. Incidentally, it was he who gave us the Empire style of furniture. That style comes straight out of his *Brutus*, for which picture—such were the scruples of 'un homme vertueux'—he did not feel justified in inventing the necessary details. He ordered, therefore, Jacob, the cabinet-maker, to execute, after his design, pieces which he supposed to be genuinely antique. These he used as models; and they are, I believe, the origin of 'Empire.' Wherefore let us be grateful to David; 'Empire,' cold, silly and pedantic though it is, being the last

original style of furniture and decoration that we in Europe have known.[1]

The period of the Revolution and Empire is about the most barren in the history of French art. Not one of David's lieutenants or rivals, not Gros, nor Girodet, nor Gérard, nor Regnault, not Prud'hon even, can by any stretch of flattery be reckoned a painter of the first class, while most of Ingres' greatest pictures were in 1815 still to be painted. There is nothing to surprise us in this when we remember the proscriptions, the emigrations and the wars ; also, both Republic and Empire aimed at a tyranny over the mind and energies of the nation, which were to be directed along State-determined grooves to patriotic ends. Davidism was a State religion, and David an executive officer. His personal influence and prestige alone were generally sufficient to crush any manifestation of individualism; and behind him was a highly organized Government, most willing, as such Governments usually are, to interfere in matters with which Governments are least competent to deal. Whence was liberation to come? From an unlikely quarter. Waterloo, which made

[1] Delécluze says that the first 'classical furniture' was made for David about 1789 or 1790. Properly speaking, these pieces were *meubles d'atelier* : they figure in *Socrate*, *Les Horaces*, *Hélène et Paris*, as well as in *Brutus*. These pictures were much studied by the fashionable hairdressers.

possible in the future the liberation of Europe, made immediately possible the emancipation of the French genius. Constable, Scott and Byron were to turn victory to purposes which would have surprised considerably the Duke of Wellington.

THE ENGLISH

IN 1815 France and England had been separated for about a quarter of a century (the thirteen months' truce of Amiens may be ignored), during which, in matters of art at any rate, neither country knew much of what was going on in the other.[1] As a matter of fact, while all had been turned topsy-turvy in France, things had developed normally over here. The romantic movement, which was under way long before the Revolution, had gathered impetus; and Wordsworth and Coleridge, Byron, Scott and Shelley were, despite the hubbub raised by old fools, not only the best English writers, but the most representative. In France, meanwhile, the movement had been arrested; and was now represented only by the pailful of Rousseauism which the less inflexible flung over their travesty of the classical tradition. That travesty—'the Greeks and the Romans' as understood by David and Luce de Lancival[2]—was what suited the re-

[1] In 1820, when Géricault arrived in London, so little was the English school known to him that he supposed it to consist entirely of landscape and marine painters.

[2] 'Je chante ce héros dans l'Aulide attendu
Par l'aspect d'une lance à son destin rendu;
Héros né d'un mortel, demi-dieu par sa mère,
Mars au-dessus des dieux élevé par Homère.'
or, better still, (*Achille à Scyros.*)
'Le Dieu dont les pavots ont la vertu propice
De reposer nos yeux du spectacle du vice.' (*Folliculus.*)

Constable. The Cornfield

volutionary and imperial bureaucrats by whom it was mercilessly imposed on every one else. Chateaubriand notwithstanding, France in 1815 was a quarter of a century behind the times.

Nevertheless, though heroic representations of Horatii and Leonidas, or, in literature, rhetorical tirades by Brutus and the Gracchi—the very dregs and scum of the seventeenth-century tradition—appealed to the men of '89, a generation was arising which suffered these things only because it dared not oppose them, nor knew with what to oppose them if it dared. This generation was tolerably sceptical about the great Revolution (though fifteen years later it was to use it as a cudgel against the Bourbons), and sick to death of the Empire, which, for war, slavery, intellectual and artistic bankruptcy, could offer nothing better than military glory, and could offer that no more. Without taking de Musset's confessions too seriously we may believe that by 1815 (when the poet himself was but five years old) the clever young men had had enough of the only 'world of reality' with which they were acquainted, and were inclined to take refuge in that world of fantastic imaginings which has been called into dubious existence by English and German literature. Add that, if republican orators and Napoleon's generals had liked being told that they were the very images of Plutarch's heroes, the Bourbons

were not unwilling that the middle ages should be glorified; and you will agree, I think, that France was ripe for Romanticism.

France, to be sure, had revelled in Ossian already. He was Napoleon's favourite poet. But Ossian had been admired not so much as the apostle of Romanticism as of savagery, and had been taken up by the Primitives, or Pre-Phidians, a school with which Ingres had once flirted, in so far as an artist can be said to flirt with people remarkable only for eccentric costume and disorderly conduct. It was after 1815 that Romanticism poured in on France from both sides, from England and Germany, the superiority of the English writers naturally making their influence predominant. German philosophy counted for something: but German painting could, at that time, have no influence whatever, because, at that time, a German school of painting did not exist. In 1815 there were but Davidism and 'les Anglais.'

Histories of French painting between 1815 and 1830 are full of them, in contemporary letters and journals the phrase crops up incessantly,—'les Anglais,' 'l'école anglaise': well, who were they, these English?[1] To begin

[1] The following extract from an article written by Baudelaire in 1859 will give some idea of the prestige enjoyed by the English as late as the middle of the century:

'Je m'étais donc fait une fête de renouer connaissance

with, the eighteenth-century tradition was not yet dead, but lived comfortably in the agreeable portraits of Lawrence. To us Sir Thomas seems a rather feeble old gentleman; in 1815, to the

avec Leslie, ce riche, naïf et noble *humourist*, expression des plus accentuées de l'esprit britannique ; avec les deux Hunt, l'un naturaliste opiniâtre, l'autre ardent et volontaire créateur du préraphaélisme ; avec Maclise, l'audacieux compositeur, aussi fougueux que sûr de lui-même ; avec Millais, ce poëte si minutieux ; avec J. Chalon, ce Claude mêlé de Watteau, historien des belles fêtes d'après-midi dans les grands parcs italiens ; avec Grant, cet héritier naturel de Reynolds ; avec Hook, qui sait inonder d'une lumière magique ses *Rêves vénitiens* ; avec cet étrange Paton, qui ramène l'esprit vers Fuseli et brode avec une patience d'un autre âge de gracieux chaos panthéistiques ; avec Cattermole, l'aquarelliste *peintre d'histoire*, et avec cet autre, si étonnant, dont le nom m'échappe, un architecte songeur, qui bâtit sur le papier des villes dont les ponts ont des éléphants pour piliers, et laissent passer entre leurs nombreuses jambes de colosses, toutes voiles dehors, des trois-mâts gigantesques ! On avait même préparé le logement pour ces amis de l'imagination et de la couleur singulière, pour ces favoris de la muse bizarre ; mais, hélas ! pour des raisons que j'ignore, et dont l'exposé ne peut pas, je crois, prendre place dans votre journal, mon espérance a été déçue. Ainsi, ardeurs tragiques, gesticulations à la Kean et à la Macready, intimes gentillesses du *home*, splendeurs orientales réfléchies dans le poétique miroir de l'esprit anglais, verdures écossaises, fraîcheurs enchanteresses, profondeurs fuyantes des aquarelles grandes comme des décors, quoique si petites, nous ne vous contemplerons pas, cette fois du moins. Représentants enthousiastes de l'imagination et des facultés les plus précieuses de l'âme, fûtes-vous donc si mal reçus la première fois et nous jugez-vous indignes de vous comprendre ? ' (*Salon de* 1859.)

rising generation of French painters, his portraits seemed miracles of beauty. Were they not generously coloured in the eighteenth-century manner? Instead of presenting that thin, licked, shiny exterior which makes many pictures by Ingres even repulsive at first sight, and reminds one sometimes of poverty-stricken bread and butter at others of the tray on which it is served, were they not freely painted with a lavish brush? Also Lawrence and the school of Reynolds, feeling themselves under no obligation to reduce contemporary men and women to the *beau idéal* of Winckelmann, seemed to have no prejudice against character. And, as if to point the moral, here was Danloux, a French *émigré*, who, having escaped from the Greeks and the Romans to the romantic island, could do as well as any of the descendants of Reynolds and Gainsborough, and better than most. 'Ici seulement,' wrote Géricault from London in 1820, 'on connaît ou l'on goûte la couleur et l'effet.'

The influence of the English school of painting was spread in France by a continual coming and going between London and Paris. It is odd to think of the more enterprising young Frenchmen hurrying across the Channel to get into the movement, just as, during the last seventy years, the alert of all nations have hurried to Paris. Yet so it was. Nevertheless, the most serviceable intermediary between

French and English painting was neither Géricault nor Charlet, nor Brunet nor Isabey, nor Delacroix even, but a young Englishman living in Paris, Bonington. Bonington was a rather feeble, flashy, clever painter; but he was an enthusiastic disciple, not of Reynolds and the portraitists, but of Gainsborough's successor in the art of landscape-painting. It was Bonington who proclaimed in France the revelation of Constable; it was he, presumably, who induced that master to send three pictures—including *The Haywain*—to the *salon* of 1824.

The *salon* of 1824, the *salon* of 1863, and the *salon d'automne* of 1904, are the three sensational dates in modern painting. The first was the *salon des Anglais*, the second the *salon des Refusés*, and the third the *rétrospective* of Cézanne. The Englishmen who sent pictures to the *salon* of 1824 were Lawrence, Constable, Thales Fielding, Copley Fielding, and Bonington. Of these only Constable strikes us now as a painter of first-rate importance; nevertheless, all of them, and Wilkie, Etty and even Leslie, too, displayed qualities to astonish and excite young Frenchmen brought up in the narrow discipline of the school. All displayed, to some extent, the qualities which distinguished Constable. And Constable's *Haywain*, though by no means his masterpiece—inferior certainly to *The Cornfield* and *The Valley Farm*—was characteristic

enough to do what it had to do, *i.e.* to provoke a revolution. For Constable, though not one of the world's great artists, is one of the founders of modern painting.

Compare a landscape by him with a landscape by Claude or Poussin, or with a Ruysdael even or a Gainsborough, or, indeed, with a landscape by any master of the seventeenth or eighteenth century, and you will perceive that the two pictures are of different worlds ; compare it, on the other hand, with a landscape by Rousseau or Corot or Millet or Pissarro or Sisley, and you will perceive that, in spite of great differences, they are of the same ; compare it, if you like, with a Royal Academy landscape, and the only essential difference to be noted is that one is a very good picture and the other a very bad. The difference between Constable and his predecessors I would say—if I may be granted a journalist's liberty of the nutshell—was, that they had made observation fit into a picture, whereas he tried to make a picture out of observation. The old masters—even the Dutch—had a preconceived notion of a picture, based on that sixteenth-century practice in which the subject was as a rule 'humane.' The subject might, however, be landscape or still-life ; but whatever it might be, it had to be fitted into the traditional conception. A landscape was composed as religious or mythological pieces or as a por-

trait would be composed; natural objects were treated as masses—monumental masses more often than not—and direct observations from nature were set down only when the grand scheme of composition seemed to require them.

Against this method, which has given us some of the masterpieces of Western art, I have not a word to say. Only it was not Constable's; and Constable was the man whom the nineteenth century followed. He was an observer; so, as their sketches prove, were many of the old masters. But Constable felt so passionately the significance and beauty of what he observed that he determined to make his observations the essence of his picture, and, with a minimum of sacrifice, out of them to create a work of art. That is where he too often failed; and that is why he is not quite of the greatest. By no means always did he succeed in welding his multitudinous facts into a coherent unity. His compositions have often a confusedness, and sometimes a downright silliness, resulting from a too scrupulous statement, from an unwillingness to tamper with nature or generalize his experience. Trees, houses, tufts of grass too often remain undigested, stick painfully out of the design, or cling to it by a thread. He is clumsy. It remained for an artist of higher genius to construct a faultless harmony out of direct and passionate observation, and so give us the perfect modern land-

scape. Corot, disciplined and directed by the classic influence of Claude, was to justify the conviction of Constable, thereby, incidentally, making possible Impressionism.

To paint their landscapes the old masters, who attached considerable importance to the elegance and suavity of their brush-work, had used much the same technique as was used in other pictures. To render the intense colour, the variety and shimmer of nature directly observed, an entirely new process was required. This Constable invented. He did not hesitate to use smears, dots, and scrapings of the palette knife to get his effects; also, he juxtaposed streaks of pure colour to obtain vividness. By this you can see how near he came to the impressionist technique; besides showing that school the way to their central theory—'Plein-airisme.' Constable himself, so far as I know, never made more than sketches in the open.[1] But his sketches are, perhaps, the most brilliant and characteristic part of his output; while the quality of his studio-pictures, if you look closely into them, will be found often as broken, exciting, and modern as that of a Renoir.

At the *salon* of 1824 Constable's pictures had

[1] Leslie believes that he painted one or two of his landscapes—*Boat-building at Flatford*, for instance—entirely in the open. This opinion is not generally accepted, however. (Leslie, *Life of Constable*, p. 53.)

such an effect on Delacroix that he is said to have withdrawn *Le Massacre de Scio*, and repainted it entirely. There may be exaggeration in the story; its mere existence is significant. What most excited the French painters was the Englishman's love and bold use of colour. Delacroix was thrilled by the juxtaposition of pure tones as a means to vividness.[1] Essentially it was a colourist revolution. The directness of Constable—made possible largely by the English practice of painting in water-colours—and his subversive technique were to bear their best fruit later. As for the preference for mediæval and renaissance rather than classical subjects—a matter of supreme importance to the ruck of the romantic school—Constable cannot be held responsible for that, neither do I know that the fashion came especially from England. On the other hand, it appears to have been the English Cotman who, with his *Engravings of Norman Antiquities*, opened French eyes to the pic-

1 'Constable, homme admirable, est une des gloires anglaises. Je vous en ai déjà parlé et de l'impression qu'il m'avait produite au moment où je peignais *Le Massacre de Scio*. Lui et Turner sont de véritables réformateurs. Ils sont sortis de l'ornière des paysagistes anciens. Notre école, qui abonde maintenant en hommes de talent dans ce genre, a grandement profité de leur exemple. Géricault était revenu tout étourdi de l'un des grands paysages qu'il (Constable) nous a envoyés.' (Lettre à Théodore Silvestre (1858): *Correspondance*, ii. 193.)

turesque possibilities of France. Nevertheless, the revolution of 1824 was, as I have said, mainly concerned with colour. And here a fact must be stated which, to some extent, qualifies all that has gone before. Géricault set out for London in the beginning of 1820; at the *salon* of 1819 he had exhibited *Le Radeau de la Méduse*, which, though no one at the time seems quite to have realized it, is, in effect, a colourist masterpiece. Before he left for England, therefore, Géricault had directly challenged the precepts of the school.

(*Photo: Librairie de France*)

Géricault. Le Marché aux Bœufs.

GÉRICAULT

THE size, dramatic effect, and flattering position in the Louvre of his masterpiece, all the good said of him by Delacroix, a century's respect, a romantic life and tragic death, notwithstanding, Géricault was underrated till 1924. Necessarily so: for not till the centenary exhibition of that year were amateurs in a position to appreciate him. Not until they had seen that astonishing assemblage of capital works, sketches and studies could they have realized that Géricault, had he lived, would surely have filled, and filled even more gloriously perhaps, the place of Delacroix in the history of nineteenth-century painting.

In 1815 he was twenty-four years old, a superb specimen of the new generation, ardent, high-spirited, intelligent, perplexed and inconsistent withal: witness his accompaniment of the flying king as far as Béthune, his sudden change of mind, disguising of himself, and precipitate return to Paris. Also he was rich and cultivated. Indeed, it is clear that the new generation was in every way, and above all artistically, more cultivated than the old.[1] 'Les musées,' says Huet, 'déserts sous David, se

[1] Baudelaire seems to have supposed that because David, Guérin, and Girodet found subjects in Homer and Virgil they read them.

remplissaient'; and at that moment Le Musée du Louvre was dominated by the genius of Rubens. By some accounts it was the restitution of the pictures plundered by Napoleon, and the bringing out, to fill the gap, of the Marie de Médicis series, which created the vogue.[1] Be the cause what it may, certain it is that Géricault and

[1] The indignation provoked in France by the restitution of these pictures is an example of one of the curiosities of human nature. Why are works of art, to which 99.99 per cent. of the human race is utterly indifferent, the infallible detonators of the most violent chauvinistic passions? Though not one man in a hundred thousand will put himself out to possess a picture, though not one in ten thousand more than ten or twelve times in his life enters a gallery, every patriot will shriek himself hoarse because a picture he would never look at were it in his national collection is going to America. About this affair of the plundering of pictures by the French and their restitution by the Allies, what a world of passionate nonsense has been spoken and written on both sides! I cannot be shocked because the French carried off pictures from the dark and dirty churches of Italy and Spain and hung them for the world to see in the Louvre; neither can I be surprised that their original owners wished to have them back. On general philanthropic grounds I think it better that masterpieces should be displayed in Paris than hidden in provincial towns—just as I think it better that they should be in London than in Dublin: the greater the centre, the more likely are they to be seen by people capable of appreciating them. But this is socialism, I suppose. Anyhow the restitution of spoil in 1815 was a more creditable affair than the stealing from Germany in 1919 of Van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb*—a picture which the Germans had not only rescued from the smutty obscurity of a Belgian cathedral, cleaned, cared for, and properly displayed, but for which—

his contemporaries were profoundly impressed by the Flemish monster; and certain also that students enamoured of his glorious freedoms, the sumptuous quality of his paint, his brave brush-work, and his power of composing in monumental masses, would not long be satisfied with the dry precepts of the school. Already

before the war—they had paid honestly in hard cash. However, the indignation of the French was boundless. Even that eminently level-headed woman, Madame de Boigne, lost her balance. Listen to her:

'Notre héros, le duc de Wellington, se fit l'exécuteur des spoliations matérielles imposées par les Alliés. Sous prétexte que les Anglais n'avaient rien à réclamer en ce genre, il trouva généreux d'aller de ses mains triomphantes décrocher les tableaux de nos musées. Ceci ne doit pas être pris comme une forme de rhétorique, c'est le récit d'un fait. On l'a vu sur une échelle, donnant lui-même l'exemple. Le jour où l'on descendit les chevaux de Venise de dessus l'arc du Carrousel, il passa la matinée perché sur le monument, vis-à-vis les fenêtres du Roi, à surveiller ce travail. Le soir il assista à une petite fête donnée par Mme. de Duras au roi de Prusse. Nous ne pouvions cacher notre indignation. Il s'en moquait et en faisait des plaisanteries. Il avait tort pourtant, notre ressentiment était légitime et plus politique que sa conduite.' (*Mémoires de Madame de Boigne*, ii. 115.)

Why *légitime*? Besides, the whole story—for all its circumstance—seems to me suspect. The Duke was the last man to exult over a fallen foe: also, he cared not 'a twopenny damn,' as he would have said, about art. When they told him that a Roman pavement had been discovered on his property at Strathfieldsaye, he said: 'Cover it up again; if people want to see that sort of thing they can go to Italy.'

in 1812 David, eyeing discontentedly the young master's first capital work, *L'Officier des Chasseurs*, had exclaimed, 'D'où cela sort-il? Je ne connais pas cette touche.' Had he known better his Louvre of that date even, he might have guessed.[1]

He could afford to travel,—and in those days French painters seem to have thought much less of journeys and long absences than they do now—so towards the end of 1816 he set out for Florence and Rome. Appropriately, since he was to be reckoned a Romantic, the motive of his exile was not so much artistic as sentimental. It may be added that he lived up to his reputation, cherishing a broken heart throughout life, enjoying periods of blackest gloom, losing his money, talking of suicide, and riding entire and sometimes unbroken horses. In Italy the work begun by Rubens was carried on by the sixteenth-century masters. Also, having seen genuine antiques, Géricault noticed what you might have supposed would have struck any observant tourist—that the works of the school were not in the least like them. Antiques, however, were not what he had come to see. His pictures have been called sculpturesque, and so they are: himself, he had fingered a chisel and dreamed of expressing his epic conceptions in an imperish-

[1] To be sure, David professed for Rubens the sort of admiration which the Archangel may have felt for Beelzebub.

able medium; that monumental style of his, however, comes rather, I think, from Rubens and the Renaissance painters than from the sculptor Michelangelo. Of his love of opposing moulded mass to mass, and of binding them together by an ample, and perhaps slightly dramatic, use of deep shadows, we need not seek an explanation outside the teaching of his proper masters.

What he looked at were the pictures; and at them he looked with eyes as catholic as those of Sir Joshua, but far more intense. He looked at everything—except perhaps the Primitives, at Raphael and Michelangelo, at Titian and Tintoret, at Guercino and Domenichino, and at the Carracci. And he found something to admire in them all. Shall I risk setting against him all our painters, poets and musicians, by quoting his written opinion? Well, here it is: 'Chaque école a son caractère; si l'on pouvait parvenir à la réunion de toutes les qualités, n'aurait-on pas atteint la perfection?' The pedantic blather of a doting old eclectic, is it not? Only you must remember that this eclectic of five-and-twenty was one of the most vigorous, full-blooded, daring, experimental, original and gifted painters of the individualistic century.

Equipped by Rubens and the masters of the full Renaissance, Géricault returned to Paris in the autumn of 1817 to struggle with his own

conceptions. Whether the painting of *Le Marché aux Bœufs*, a work too little seen by amateurs and perhaps even finer, though on a smaller scale, than *Le Radeau de la Méduse*, preceded by some months the execution of that masterpiece I do not know; nor does it matter. *Le Radeau*—the final composition of which was determined, as innumerable studies and sketches prove, only after prolonged cogitation—hangs in the Louvre for all the world to see, and was first exhibited at the *salon* of 1819. Its success was immediate and normal—that is to say, it was greeted with a storm of vulgar and senseless abuse by academic painters and schoolmasters, by the public which believes in such people and the critics who take tips from them, and with enthusiasm by the sensitive and intelligent. The judicious Kératry judged the colour 'monotone et uniforme'—a sentence which seems in every sense excessive: in the drawing Emeric Duval of *Le Moniteur* discovered 'de l'incorrection, de l'exagération et tout à la fois de la sécheresse': while *Le Drapeau Blanc* accused the painter of having calumniated the whole Ministry of Marine.

That the taste of the Government in 1819 was neither vulgar nor reactionary goes without saying, since it was directed by the excellent M. de Forbin; and Géricault seems to have expected of it not only a medal, but a purchase.

A medal he got, but no cash ; which vexed him. In this he was unreasonable, not to say silly ; for *Le Radeau*, besides being a work of art, is unmistakably a political tract. At that moment the incident was being used freely as a stick wherewith to belabour the Government. Not unnaturally : the story was of the most damaging. In June 1816 the frigate *La Méduse*, bound for Senegal, became detached from the squadron in a storm and foundered off Cape Blanc. The captain, an ex-*émigré*, took to the boats, taking in tow a raft on which he put the bulk of his crew—149 souls in all. Under stress of weather, though some say the cables parted, it seems probable that the boats cut loose, leaving the wretched men on the raft to fend for themselves. Twelve days later the corvette *Argus* picked up fifteen survivors—all that remained of the crew of *le radeau de 'La Méduse.'* Amongst the survivors were the surgeon, Corréard, and a seaman of some education, Savigny. These, at the end of 1817, published a detailed account of the incredible horrors—hunger, despair, murder, and madness—of their ordeal. By 1821 the little brochure had run through four editions and become a staple of liberal declamation. Géricault appears to have consulted frequently both authors as well as the ship's carpenter, all of whom he induced to pose. For the other figures he preferred to professional models his friends ;

and curious visitors to the Louvre may be amused to know that the adolescent body flung across the left side of the canvas is said to be that of Delacroix.

Naturally, the picture caused some commotion in circles which knew and cared nothing for painting; and Géricault complained, disingenuously enough, that the general public judged it on political rather than æsthetic grounds, that admirers turned out to be merely anti-Bourbon and detractors merely royalist. It may be doubted whether Géricault himself was much swayed by political passions, but seeing that of the two great compositions which were in train at the time of his death, one was to be called *The Slave Trade*, and the other *French Soldiers opening the Prisons of the Spanish Inquisition*, it is to be feared that he was not insensible to the profit to be drawn from them. Had these compositions been executed, they must have taken an important place in the career of the artist and the history of nineteenth-century painting, not on account of the admirable sentiments insinuated, but because they would have been the ripe fruit of a revolutionary experience. This experience was to give a twist to the road that Géricault was opening, to modify his technique, and open his eyes to an entirely new conception of art. Early in 1819 he arrived in London; and

in London he was to stay, not only fascinated by the life and thrilled by the art, but himself eagerly productive, for the best part of three years.

The influence of England on the art of Géricault cannot be gauged from the famous little racing picture in the Salle des États. To appraise it you must study the pictures of horses in their stalls or at exercise which he produced during or just after his stay. Géricault had ever cherished an intense, and, as it turned out, unfortunate, passion for horses: it was as a result of a third riding accident within a few years that he died in January 1824. From Constable he learned to observe them; and Constable it was who helped him to a technique wherewith to express his acute, one may almost say gloating, observations. This technique, however, was so modified by the intelligent admirer of Rubens and the Renaissance that his little studies often thrill one with a fat and glossy *matière* which seems to anticipate Courbet. Also, in England he picked up a taste for oddities and characteristics in human beings. This new passion reveals itself most happily in a series of lithographs of street-scenes and queer types executed and published in England—at that time the home of this comparatively unknown process; and to less advantage in the studies of idiots, in oil, done after his return to Paris.

These last are, to my mind, of little value ; but they display unmistakably the influence, ill assimilated, of Hogarth and the English portrait-painters. Nevertheless, the pictures of these last years, with their rich colour, succulent paint, and—when they are of human beings—vivid characterization, suffice to convince me that, had he lived, Géricault, not Delacroix, would have become chief of that school which was to deliver French painting from the Greeks and the Romans.

Alive, Géricault was never hailed as a chief. Indeed, not till after his death was he hailed as a Romantic, though his last picture, L'*Épave*, is furiously, and worse, in that manner. In proof of his loyalty to the classical school disciplinarian professors are fond of quoting, and falsifying, as professors will, a saying of his : 'David, le premier de nos artistes, le régénérateur de l'École,' omitting to conclude the sentence, which continues 'n'a dû qu'à son génie les succès . . . etc.' They omit also to remind us of how Géricault, watching one day a child scribbling on the wall, exclaimed, 'Quel dommage l'École gâtera tout cela.' The fact is, Géricault believed in absolute liberty and a catholic taste ; so perhaps, after all, he would never have made a chief of any school or party. He lacked the necessary stupidity and intolerance. He was a man of the world rather than

the conventicle, who set art above orthodoxy and life above loyalty. He was as much a gentleman as a painter. Such a one, you would say, could never become leader of a revolution, were it not that almost precisely such another was Eugène Delacroix.

DELACROIX

SO impressive is his position in the history of modern art that it is difficult to judge Delacroix on his merits. Unquestionably they are high ; yet I cannot rate them quite so high as they are rated by contemporary French opinion. He seems to me a good, but hardly a great artist. On the other hand, he is certainly one of the pillars of nineteenth-century painting ; while at the age of thirty, or less, he was recognized by friends and foes alike as chief of the romantic school. This honour he neither coveted nor enjoyed : to the end of his days he disclaimed the title of ' Romantic,' and so far was he from ambitioning the rôle of chief that he refused even to open a studio.

If I do not call him great, that is because his pictures do not move me as do those of the great. Maybe my sensibility is at fault ; all I can say is that to me his forms and colours never give what those of Ingres or Courbet or Renoir or Matisse, for instance, give often—the grand thrill of ecstasy and surprise. They seem to lack that magical beauty, implicit perhaps in the forms of nature, but only to be evoked by great artists —that beauty which, without the revelation of the masters, had remained to most unknown, that always surprising and never quite explicable beauty which works of art alone can offer, and

Delacroix. Le Massacre de S[illegible]

which, whenever experienced, adds a new and exciting ingredient to that queer mixture men call life. The pictures of Delacroix seem to add nothing; they do but refer the mind back to things already experienced. That these things are of the subtlest and most exquisite goes without saying; but the appreciation of them is a work of collaboration, not the enjoyment of a divine gift fallen mysteriously from the skies.

Delacroix's art is essentially literary; for literary qualities it was admired during his life, and for them, in my opinion—an opinion which will vex, I fear, some of our best critics—it has been admired ever since. When I say that he was literary, I do not mean that he was coarsely so in the manner beloved of the people. Look at that picture by Savoldo in the National Gallery of the Magdalene setting out to visit the tomb. It is fine painting; but its appeal is not purely, nor mainly even, plastic, not chiefly for its line and colour is it so greatly, and so justly, admired. The Magdalene is unmistakably a *fille repentie*. An instinctive coquettishness appears beneath the decent grey cloak which instinct, lying inoffensive but alert, has arranged so prettily; while the gracious gesture with which she holds it up betrays a refined but unsubdued temperament. Also, though she is going in all reverence and

humility to the tomb of her divine master, one cannot but feel, as one is meant to feel, that she has something the air of going to a rendezvous. The theme could be elaborated were elaboration to the purpose: it is not, because here I am concerned only to illustrate what I mean by the better sort of 'literariness.' Such literariness, unless I mistake, is the quality in which Delacroix excelled, and for which he was, and is, most admired.

His magnificent champion, Baudelaire, was, though he tried sometimes to conceal the fact from himself, in his heart under no illusions. Always it is for subtle literary qualities that he praises his hero most convincingly:

> 'Une autre qualité, très-grande, très-vaste, du talent de M. Delacroix, et qui fait de lui le peintre aimé des poëtes, c'est qu'il est essentiellement littéraire. Non seulement sa peinture a parcouru, toujours avec succès, le champ des hautes littératures, non seulement elle a fréquenté Arioste, Byron, Dante, Walter Scott, Shakespeare, mais elle sait révéler des idées d'un ordre plus élevé, plus fines, plus profondes que la plupart des peintures modernes.'—(*Curiosités Esthétiques*, 242.) [1]

[1] 'Delacroix, lac de sang, hanté des mauvais anges,
Ombragé par un bois de sapins toujours vert,
Où, sous un ciel chagrin, des fanfares étranges
Passent comme un soupir étouffé de Weber.'
(*Fleurs du Mal*: *Les Phares.*)

He adds that at the master's funeral the chief mourners were men of letters. Goethe's fine compliment was provoked by the literary qualities of his illustrations: 'I must admit,' says the sage to Eckermann on November 29th, 1826, 'that myself I had not represented the scene (Faust and Mephistopheles galloping past the gibbet) so perfectly.' He goes on to opine that the genius of Delacroix is manifest in the fact that he compels the reader to conceive the scene as he (the artist) imagines it; and adds, 'M. Delacroix has surpassed in intensity the pictures I had made in my own mind even.' For once Goethe's art-criticism is to the point: Delacroix's most remarkable gift being a power of transposing literary conceptions into a visual medium.[1] On a small scale he did for the ideas of poets and novelists what Shakespeare did for Plutarch and the English chronicles. Only, whereas one transposed literature into good painting, the other converted history into supreme poetry.

Delacroix had the character and temperament of a man of letters, and that remarkable journal of his, published in 1893, is, especially in its later

[1] How seriously Delacroix took the literary inspiration of his works may be surmised from the following saying of his, cited, I think, by Chassériau:

'Plus l'ouvrage qui donne l'idée d'un tableau est parfait, moins un art voisin qui s'en inspire aura de chances de faire un effet égal sur l'imagination.'

and more elaborate parts, more the work of a writer than of a painter jotting down his fancies and reflections. He was witty, fastidious and cultivated, fond of argument and brilliant in argument, utterly contemptuous of 'les gens de métier'—the painters who understood their job and understood nothing else. Incidentally, he was in youth something of a dandy, one of a little band which made it its business to import the latest English fashions. He was profoundly sceptical, noting in his journal (1849): 'Je crois . . . qu'on peut affirmer que le progrès doit amener nécessairement, non pas un progrès plus grand encore, mais à la fin négation du progrès, retour au point d'où on est parti.' And in his tastes, especially his taste in books—with which in view of his rather stay-at-home habits we may suppose him more extensively acquainted than with pictures[1]—he was classical. His admiration for Virgil, Racine and Boileau, for Raphael and the Greeks, must have puzzled sorely his romantic followers, to whom these names were anathema.

How then did he come to be chief of the romantic school? To answer that question completely one will have to discover what, about the year 1830, was meant by Romanticism—

[1] Delacroix never visited Italy, Spain, or Holland. His expeditions to Morocco and England are classic; he once made a flying visit to Brussels and Antwerp.

matter of itself for an essay. Here we need observe only that, though Delacroix was undisputed chief of the school, he never admitted that he was romantic. To be sure, the chief of a school rarely is of that or any other school. He is himself. Schools are for those who have to be some one else. One groups artists on account of similarities; the more personal and original, the more will they tend to escape classification. The qualities which a score of artists have in common are not likely to be the most interesting that they possess ; and most of those held in common by the Romantics were not only uninteresting but horrid. If Delacroix must be put to school at all it should be with Constable and Géricault in the school of Colourists—a school of which the common characteristics were at any rate artistic and honourable. In that school he acquired two excellent habits which differentiate all he did from Davidian productions. He learnt to substitute mass for silhouette; and he learnt to conceive of composition as a balance of movements rather than as something static. This was to fly full in the face of Winckelmann's *beau idéal*, to break sharply indeed with the frozen calm of the Greeks and the Romans.

Delacroix was against the neo-classical school, or, at any rate, the school was against Delacroix; by that fact alone he became a Romantic, as

Romanticism was understood in the days of Charles x. 'Quiconque,' says Huet, 'quiconque ne faisait pas des soldats de Marathon était romantique.' Every one who has read a word of history, who has read the papers for that matter, knows that under a crushing tyranny—and the tyranny of the school was crushing—all shades of dissident opinion—whig, liberal, radical, socialist—tend to merge in a common opposition. After the death of Géricault, Delacroix was the most eminent of opposition painters; by the opposition therefore he was saluted 'chief.' Was he not abused more violently than any one else by the officials? How he was abused! 'C'était un sauvage, un barbare, un maniaque, un enragé, un fou, qu'il fallait renvoyer à son lieu de naissance, Charenton.[1] Il avait le goût du laid, de l'ignoble, du monstrueux; et puis il ne savait pas dessiner. . . . Il jetait des seaux de couleur contre la toile, il peignait avec un balai ivre—ce balai ivre parut très-joli et fit en son temps un effet énorme.' (Gautier, *Histoire du Romantisme.*) It would seem incredible that the established critics, the bigwigs and high functionaries of the profession, should have used such language of the third painter of their age, had not the same people said the same things about every original artist who appeared during the nineteenth century; had we not heard them with our own

[1] Delacroix was born at Saint-Maurice.

ears bellowing comparable nonsense at Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso.[1]

Delacroix stood for liberty—members of persecuted oppositions generally do. Even socialists are in favour of free speech until they get the upper hand. Delacroix was consistent and honest. He defended the rights of Courbet, with whose art he had very little sympathy, before the jury of the *salon*; and Jules Breton tells us how superbly impressive he was when he spoke of individual liberty and the duty of respecting unfamiliar tendencies. So, though he may be claimed for the romantic movement on account

[1] M. Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, however, tried to be statesmanlike about it—as he was about the ballet girls' skirts, which he lengthened,—sent for Delacroix and earnestly counselled him to 'dessiner d'après la bosse.' One can fancy the late Lord Curzon giving Mr. Sickert or Mr. Duncan Grant a similar bit of advice. This M. Sosthène fascinates me because he justifies at every turn my conviction that the true minister of fine arts is born poetwise. It was he who was observed after the abdication of '14 advancing with a rope to drag the statue of Napoleon off the Vendôme column : he couldn't do it either. Courbet went one better when he fetched down the column itself. He it was who engarlanded the statues with tin vine leaves. And in 1832 he would have rendered a final service to the Legitimate cause, as Madame de Boigne assures us, by preventing that ill-timed landing in France of la duchesse de Berry. He would have gone to expostulate with her at Massa. 'Pensez-vous avoir pu réussir à l'arrêter ?' inquired Madame de Boigne. 'Sans aucun doute,' replied the ex-minister, 'je n'aurais consenti à être son amant qu'à cette condition.'

of his descent from the revolutionary Colourists, and on account of his early subjects, often dramatic, not to say violent, and drawn mostly from modern (*i.e.* non-classical) history and literature, it is above all on account of his passion for artistic independence that Delacroix belongs to 'the left.' It is this firm and passionate belief in individualism which, more than anything else, makes him, not only a master, but a hero of modern painting.

(*Photo: Archives du Louvre*)

Delacroix, Juillet 28. 1830

ROMANTICISM IN 1830

THE best definition I know of the term 'Romantic' is that given by Mr. Roger Fry in *L'Amour de l'Art*, mai 1924: 'I call romantic,' says he, 'any work of art which to produce its effect counts on the association of ideas which it sets up in the mind of the spectator. I call classical the work which to provoke emotion depends on its own formal organization.' So far as painting, at any rate, goes, I can find no hole in this; whether it will do as well for literature seems less clear. I believe it will: certainly it is not to be demolished by Professor Quiller-Couch's method. To take at haphazard a few lines from any book of verse or prose, and on them challenge a decision, is nothing to the purpose, since the terms 'Classical' and 'Romantic' are to be applied to complete works rather than excerpts. There are lines which depend so obviously on their appeal to associated ideas that they may be described out of hand as 'romantic'; others of so pure a formal beauty that, ignoring the context, we salute them at once as 'classical'; what is more, one could almost certainly find romantic lines in Racine and lines of classical beauty in Keats. But most lines, most paragraphs even, taken by themselves, are neither one nor the other—no more than are scraps of contours and patches of colour.

It was not over questions of this nicety that the men of 1830 came to cuffs. Certainly, in the beginning, there was a real æsthetic point at issue between the masters of the colourist movement and the schoolmasters, between Géricault and Delacroix on the one hand, and David and Ingres on the other. The former, deriving from Rubens and the English, composed in mass and believed in exploiting all the possibilities of colour ; the latter conceived of colour as something which should be allowed to interfere as little as possible with precision of line, and took for their ideal of composition a Roman bas-relief.[1] This artistic quarrel between painters, however, was soon lost in an uproarious brawl between the old imperial gang and the young nineteenth century. Of that century the pronounced characteristic was individualism ; and the right of the individual to express himself in his own way, which was what the new generation imagined it was demanding, was what the school, as resolutely, denied.

1 'This—say the wiseacres—may be true of David, it is not true of Ingres.' Well, listen :

'J'écrirai sur la porte de mon atelier : école de dessin, et je ferai des peintres.' (Ingres.)

'La ligne c'est le dessin, c'est tout.' (Ingres.)

'Une chose bien dessinée est toujours assez bien peinte.' (Ingres.)

'Messieurs, devant les Rubens, mettez-vous des œillères comme aux chevaux.' (Ingres.)

Essentially, the romantic movement was a rebellion. The new age was asserting itself. It asserted by differentiating ; and this vehement assertion and violent differentiation went by the name of Romanticism. Invariably the present looks for support against the immediate past to the more remote, and rarely fails to find it. Wherefore, since the elder generation leant on the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries, the romantic writers appealed to the sixteenth and the middle ages: the painters leant on the writers. They clutched at Gothic architecture and decoration as well, hung on to mediæval painting (which was reckoned pre-eminently 'free'), and pitted the mysteries of 'the Orient'—vague but impressive designation—against the all too lucid gods of Greece and Rome. From Germany, not from the Orient, came, via Rome, vague rumours of a vaguer art based on an insipid worship of the Cologne Primitives. Before 1830 Overbeck had failed to found a German Pre-Raphaelite movement; and some stains of his small beer filtered into France, Orsel of Lyons aiding. But these more or less æsthetic innovations were not the cause of that terrific battle which, about the year 1830, raged round the name 'Romantic.' Few people feel passionately about art, yet every one took a hand in that affair. Every one was concerned because the fight was for nothing less than the right of the new age

not to defer to the wisdom of the old. The bald-heads—to see so many of them in serried rows made *les jeunes féroces* in the parterre scream 'À la guillotine, les genoux!' at the *première* of *Hernani* — swore by the eighteenth century: 'Down with the eighteenth century!' screamed the *jeunes féroces*. This screaming produced a curious paradox. The eighteenth had been the century of liberal and progressive ideas; the Romantics, therefore, had to be monarchical and Catholic. The rebels were on the side of Government and against the disaffected. So topsy-turvy a situation could not endure. It was not long before the more intelligent realized that the spirit which intoxicated the romantic poets and painters was that which was stirring all Europe to revolt.

The Romantics had, however, a better founded quarrel with the age of reason. The young Romantic was preoccupied with his personal relation to the universe. That, I suppose, is a matter with which at a certain age every intelligent young man in every place and period is preoccupied. Here Oxford and Cambridge exist mainly to nurse him through this delicious distemper of intellectual puberty. The eighteenth century had attempted to bridge the unbridgeable by the aid of reason and the discursive intellect. Logic and science were its tools—excellent tools, but impersonal, and therefore

little to the taste of young individualists in a hurry. Emotion and intuition appeared to them more personal and therefore more trustworthy. The Romantics tended to seek certainty in religion : in orthodox Christianity at first, later in Pantheism, Saint-Simonisme, or what some chose to call 'the religion of humanity.' The eighteenth century was voted 'dry and cynical.'

Only in so far as the romantic revolution may be said to have embraced the colourist can it be considered one of the springs of that nineteenth-century painting which counts. The great artists of the century all, I think, descend from the Colourists: Picasso was the first to return even whimsically to the tradition of David.[1] But masters, we agreed, belong to no school unless it be the school of masters. In spite of conspicuous dis-similarities and antagonisms, good painters are fundamentally alike, because they are good painters. They have in common their genius and sincerity ; they all create form of æsthetic significance—their pictures are works of art. The bad of different schools have only their badness in common, the æsthetic insignificance of their forms ; but of any particular school the rank and file have in common a dozen irrelevant tricks and pretensions, a herd hatred for the last generation, and above all, a herd

[1] Unless you call Degas a great artist.

preference for certain subjects. As was to be expected, the Romantics' battle with their elders raged most fiercely round this utterly irrelevant question. 'Quiconque ne faisait pas les soldats de Marathon était romantique.' Traditionally, art is a thing to discuss and lose one's temper about ; unfortunately, it is a thing which very few people can understand. For purposes of argument and irritation, therefore, it is necessary to discover something at once generally comprehensible and speciously artistic. Subject is the indicated bone of contention. The Reactionaries accused the Romantics of portraying ugly creatures and repulsive incidents. The Romantics called the favourite models of the school *pompiers*, implying that these naked heroes in their helmets were like nothing so much as firemen. It was a later generation which changed the noun into an adjective, and applied it, not to the painted figures, but to the state of mind which produced them.

How little æsthetic considerations or questions of style had to do with the romantic revolution may be inferred from the fact that the two painters who made Romanticism popular, Delaroche and Ary Scheffer, were pupils and were pleased to consider themselves followers of Ingres. They were reckoned romantic because, instead of exploiting a little erudition as the *pompiers* did, they exploited cheap senti-

ment and vulgar curiosity. The Romantics left the heroes of Marathon alone, and gave the public melodramatic descriptions of more recent actions: Versailles is full of them. They mongered mysteries, soused in a sticky sauce of bourgeois religiosity. They recounted touching or humorous anecdotes, and illustrated favourite scenes from the works of fashionable authors. Also they gave the people 'local colour'—dismiss from your mind all recollections of impressionist jargon: all the Romantics did was to take care that when they painted a picture of the Bride of Abydos the accessories should be redolent of the gorgeous East. Such was Romanticism as it was understood in 1845.

For by 1845 the battle was won, or rather the tommies had fraternized. The two camps, the followers of Ingres and the followers of Delacroix, had merged; the former no longer painted naked heroes, the latter had discarded whatever rags of sincerity and conviction the struggle may have engendered. When Couder and Blondel, Scheffer and Delaroche, were all hanging together, there was seen to be very little to choose between them. The school welcomed the romantic ruck without forgiving Delacroix and Chassériau. Indeed the school had something better to do than harass and humiliate bad painters beloved of good

citizens; at Barbizon were Corot and Rousseau to injure and insult, and in the distance was Courbet.

The influence of the Colourists—Constable, Géricault, Delacroix—persisted: it persists to this day. Romanticism died before its chief, and Delacroix died in 1863. The men and the descendants of the men who in 1830 had been Romantics formed the more disreputable and more popular wing of the school. In the history of art they have no place. Not so the descendants of David; for, if that school died before its second master, Ingres, its carcase remained and stank. The school has claimed the attention of every historian of nineteenth-century painting because it has signalized itself as the enemy of every first-rate painter of the age. And because the school professed, though it was far from practising, the doctrines of David and Ingres, Neo-Classicism became for artists and art-lovers the symbol of all that was maleficent and spiteful. The school contrived to make of the Greeks and the Romans a bogey—a bogey which only the school itself could demolish. About the beginning of the present century it set about that task. Fired, I presume, by the success of Besnard and his like, the old gentlemen of the *Institut* turned skittish. Some became positively modern, flirted, that is, with notions newish in their youth, with the crude nostrums

of the Realists and the fag-end fancies of Romanticism. These bald-pated pirouettes of the official masters sufficed to ease authentic Neo-Classicism of a load of prejudice. The epithets 'classical' and 'official' became distinguishable. And the rising generation, unless I mistake, is quite inclined, under the direction of the ingenious M. Lhote, to find a great deal to be said for the practice and theory of David.

SYNCRETISM

THE most romantic figure amongst nineteenth-century painters was not a Romantic. With his exotic air, glorious eyes, passionate countenance, dandiacal ways, and early death hastened, they say, by alternate excesses of love and work, Chassériau deserves at least what was never refused to Ovid—that the ladies should have a kindness for his memory. What we, critics and impartial amateurs, are to think of him, must depend of course on other considerations. But this I will say, to admire Chassériau for his eyes and ardours is quite as sensible as to admire him for having been the master of Puvis de Chavannes.

Yet for that it is many critics and amateurs seem to admire him most; though in so doing they are about as reasonable as one who should admire Scott because he was the master of Manzoni. Which notwithstanding, the association of names may be turned to account, since it permits us to contrast Chassériau's fragment (*La Paix*) in the Louvre with Puvis de Chavannes' *Ste. Geneviève* in the Panthéon. Take the famous and much reproduced blessing of the child saint: it is simply an adequate piece of nineteenth-century religious painting, not much superior to Burne-Jones at his best, though better than Maurice Denis. Its merit, like that of a Burne-

(*Photo: Archives du Louvre*)

Chassériau. La paix (fragment of fresco)

Jones, consists in the manifestation of a sincere though not very sensitive appreciation of the Italian Primitives. The whole thing comes out of Giotto; and less out of the great composer than out of that rather wooden imitator of Roman sculpture which was Giotto too: it comes out of Giotto by way of Benozzo Gozzoli. The figures are disposed according to a sound tradition; but in the figures themselves, in the drawing and painting, there is neither beauty nor personality. All is stiff and unfelt; in fact the thing is academic, conventional to the smallest gesture, only it is of an academy which taught painting and design before Raphael was heard of. Good judges, when it was painted, liked it, as they had liked the Pre-Raphaelites, because it was neither in the dreary classical nor the vulgar sentimental convention of the age, but reminded them of a noble past. To-day it reminds us only of late nineteenth-century ecclesiasticism.

Turn now to the Louvre and contemplate the fragment of Chassériau's decoration. The elements of which it, too, is composed are conventional: Peace, young mothers with babies, men ploughing, reapers, harvesters, corn and wine. But there the formula ends. The adorable beauty of these figures is to me one of the most moving things in nineteenth-century painting. And how unlike the

calculated disposition of Puvis' chessmen is the marriage of these fluent lines and colours. All is large; nothing pompous. Figures match landscape; human forms, trees and sheaves, vines and oxen, twine in and out of each other, but never out of the composition, without clash and without interruption. And then compare details: where the forms of Puvis were cut out of cardboard these are sensibly modelled in the very stuff of beauty. They are classical; from Greece they come; but they have passed through some strange region where the ardours and languors of the tropics have softened the Parian contours. 'C'est un Indien,' said Gautier, 'qui a fait ses études en Grèce.' That is one way of looking at it—the psychological way. The historian might say—and what he said would be strictly true—it is a pupil of Ingres who has come under the spell of Delacroix. Neither explanation by itself is adequate. In the art of Chassériau there is a clash of temperaments and a clash of styles.

As Chassériau is generally described as a Creole, I dare say he was one. There is something fabulous about his early history, and I cannot learn for certain the maiden name of his mother. All I know is that he was born towards the end of 1819 at Samana in Saint-Domingo, and that his father, a man of ability and adventurous spirit, ended his days as consul at

Porto-Rico. Théodore was an extravagantly precocious child. At the age of ten he had made up his mind, not only that he wished to be a painter, but that he wished to paint like M. Ingres. Through the good offices of Amaury Duval, into M. Ingres' studio he went; and in the year 1836, when he was less than seventeen, had a picture in the *salon*: stranger still, this picture, *The Return of the Prodigal* (Musée de la Rochelle), is a work of some merit. At this point Ingres returned to Rome to take charge of the Villa Médicis, and failed to take with him his favourite pupil. Favourite, the epithet is perhaps excessive: at any rate the master recognized from the first his pupil's prodigious talent, and felt so bitterly what the old tyrant was pleased to consider his subsequent treason that he would avert his eyes or hold up a coat-tail when he had to pass one of Chassériau's pictures.[1]

But was it likely the young Chassériau was going to waste his golden years with the tame

[1] 'Cet enfant-là sera le Napoléon de la peinture' is one of his recorded judgments on the early work of Chassériau.

At Rome in 1840 it is said that Chassériau went so far as to argue with the master. One can understand that the man who was positively bandying words with M. Ingres dared ask Lacordaire—then in retreat—to pose for him, though this action was reckoned bold at the time. It is to the credit of Lacordaire that he acceded to Chassériau's request and denied that of Lehmann.

apes of Ingres? Inevitably he came under the influence of Delacroix; inevitably made friends with the brilliant generation of 1830; inevitably was discovered by Théophile Gautier. He did not forget, however, what he had learnt from his first master; and the rest of his short life—he died in 1857—is consumed in a passionate effort to combine the tyrant's narrow and terrific intensity with the generous profusion of Delacroix. Out of these he had to forge an instrument capable of expressing his own contradictory nature.

For the contradiction was in his own temper: Ingres and Delacroix were but the flints that struck out the conflicting sparks. To quell the conflict by fusing the flashes of inspiration was Chassériau's problem. In the rind, to change my metaphor, his genius was exquisitely classical. He loved Greek art as it was possible to love it in the middle years of the nineteenth century; and never, since it was created, has it been better, or perhaps so well, understood. The eighteenth century understood it so ill that it confounded Greek with Roman. As for the areopagite David, Flaxman had a surer sense of the glory that was Greece. But with the end of the war, the Elgin marbles, and the habit of making pilgrimages to Athens, artists and amateurs began to realize that there was a beauty, something more than human and less than ab-

stract, infinitely grander than anything Rome had dreamed of and subtler than anything the high Renaissance had achieved. This was Hellas: this it was Chassériau instinctively understood; of this a sense ran out of the tips of his fingers. This instinctive understanding made him the greatest decorator of the nineteenth century. No matter how furiously his temper might boil and bubble, he never lost hold of his sense of beauty. With bewildering fecundity he continued to create suave forms at once expressive and comprehensible, at once decorative and of an adorable purity.

But inside the rind was something utterly un-Greek, something hardly European for that matter. Inside was a paradoxical compound of ardour and lethargy. What he had to express, and to express classically, was a sense of what life might be if only time would stand still and allow us to walk round our fiercest desires, contemplating and enjoying them languidly. And in his happiest achievements—*Suzanne*, *Vénus Anadyomène*, *Andromède*, *Les Troyennes*, *Esther*, *Apollon et Daphné*, *Sapho*, *Mlle. Cabarrus*, the decorations for La Cour des Comptes—he has succeeded. He has succeeded in giving us the rind and the pulp; and I suppose it is this simultaneous administration of bitter and sweet enveloped in forms at once rigid and yielding which gives his work that seductiveness

which may lead us—which may have led me —to overestimate its essential value.

If I have been seduced into exaggeration I cannot complain of having been taken unaware. One morning I remember, coming from a visit to a private collection of Chassériau's pictures, I had the happiness to get a nod from an *amazone* who was cantering up the Bois. One of the most deliciously feminine creatures imaginable, she looked, in her English-cut habit, starched stock, stiff hat, shiny boots and spurs, more feminine than ever. I remember wondering at the time whether perhaps I had not done more than justice to the master of the *Vénus Anadyomène*.

'Regrettez-vous le temps où le ciel sur la terre
Marchait et respirait dans un peuple de dieux,
Où Vénus Astarté, fille de l'onde amère,
Secouait, vierge encore, les larmes de sa mère,
Et fécondait le monde en tordant ses cheveux?' [1]

However that may be, certain it is that one can easily and excusably form an absurdly wrong idea of the art of Chassériau. If the judgment of some has been debauched by his exotic grace, others have been betrayed by their own carelessness into an accusation of plagiarism. At the age of thirty-seven—the age at which Chas-

[1] Of course it was Gautier who felt the applicability of the opening stanza of *Rolla* to the *Vénus Anadyomène*.

sériau died—a painter is either on the broad road which ends in the Academy or a student still. Chassériau by the study of Delacroix was still trying to enrich his palette. In the course of those studies he painted pictures which are nothing more than imitations, sometimes charming, sometimes feeble, of that master. To judge Chassériau by such experiments as *Intérieur de Harem* or *Arabes se défiant* is more misleading than to judge Raphael by the Mond Madonna. Also, it is perfectly true that from his pencil drawings the influence of Ingres is never absent; neither is the influence of Titian absent from the paintings of El Greco. But neither Ingres nor Delacroix ever breathed, much less expressed, that atmosphere of gentle, hesitating, effective sensuality which Chassériau created for Alice Ozy and La Princesse Belgioioso to inhabit. Chassériau was no plagiarist; you may call him syncretist if you like odd names.

Essentially he was a decorator; wherefore it is an extraordinary misfortune that, though he has been dead not seventy years, of his vast decorative work next to nothing remains. On the rare mornings when there is light enough in Saint-Merry or Saint-Philippe-du-Roule to see what time, and neglect which amounts to Vandalism, have spared, one sees that it is so little as to be hardly worth the immense trouble of seeing. His masterpiece, the decoration of the

staircase at the Palais d'Orsay, the work of two years, was destroyed by communists. Fragments were saved: of these three only are to be seen ; the rest moulder, I suppose, in the cellars of the Louvre. To destroy works of art seems to me inexcusable always ; but practical people hold, I know, that in a struggle for power nothing can be sacred from military necessity. When the Palais d'Orsay and some twenty more of the most beautiful monuments of the most beautiful of great cities were destroyed the struggle was over ; there was no military purpose to serve. The burning of Paris was an act of vulgar spite. Wherefore, when business or pleasure takes me into the neighbourhood of the Mur des Fédérés, I, too, raise my hat, in memory.

(*Photo: Druet*)

Millet. Les Glaneuses (detail)

BARBIZON

I SEE no good reason for banishing this useful name, seeing that, like other labels, it gives a certain amount of information. That, I suppose, is all one expects of a label. When I am told of a picture I have never seen that it is 'trecento,' I am told nothing about its quality and only a little about its style. I am, however, given to understand that it is more like a Giotto than a Watteau; and that is something. The label 'Barbizon' is affixed to certain landscape-painters who flourished between 1840 and 1870, and had certain preoccupations and a trick or two in common; the fact that some of them were never perhaps in their lives at the village of Barbizon, nor even in the forest of Fontainebleau, detracts nothing from the virtue of the ticket. Neither is it of consequence that several artists—Daumier and Barye, for instance—who had nothing but sincerity and independence in common with what is called the Barbizon school made visits in the neighbourhood; no one in his senses being likely to dub either of them 'Barbizon' on that account. But thirty or forty painters, scattered over the north and centre of France, and as far afield as Belgium, all hard at work between '40 and '70, all possessing, or seeming to possess, peculiar aspirations and a technique for realizing them, did appear to have

enough in common to be fitted with a title. 'Barbizon' was the name they got; and they got it because Théodore Rousseau, reckoned by the public their chief, Aligny, Diaz, and Millet (a doubtful member), spent a good part of their most productive years in or near that village. Daubigny, Troyon, and Dupré, though apparently less regular visitors to the eponymous spot, were not less famous members. But Corot, by far the greatest, of course, is too personal and detached to belong really to any school, and much too big to be fitted into any pigeon-hole. He is of 'the masters.'

According to Fromentin—perhaps the most illuminating critic of the nineteenth century, besides being one of its remarkable prose-writers —the Barbizon school ('l'école des sensations' he calls it) arose in 1828 with Flers, Cabat, Dupré, Rousseau, and Corot. All these landscape-painters, be it noted, were Parisians. They came at nature through picture galleries and books. They are children of the romantic revolution. Speaking roughly, forgetting the obscure George Michel (1763-1843) and the too easily forgotten Gabriel Moreau (1740-1806), ignoring too that part of Watteau's art which might be described as landscape, one may say that between Claude and Théodore Rousseau there was no landscape-painting in France. Under the Davidian dispensation that

art had come to be reckoned a menial craft, and in this opinion Delacroix seems to have been at one with the school. It had passed to Holland, where for our purpose—the historical one—Ruysdael is the significant name, and thence, towards the end of the eighteenth century, to England. Fromentin is wrong in supposing that the bridge between Claude and Ruysdael, on the one hand, and modern landscape-painting—landscape-painting in 1875 he means—on the other, is Barbizon : it is Constable. Or, to be exact, there are two spans to this bridge. It was Constable who invented a vocabulary in which to express the passion provoked by his vivid sense of nature and exquisite observation : what the Barbizon people did was to transform this provincial dialect into a polished, orderly, and logical language of universal application. Barbizon gave landscape-painting a grammar and a style—not style, which every good painter possesses and creates for himself—but a style—something which the Dutch school had possessed and the English lacked rather. And in so far as this is allowed to be the school's great achievement Corot, I suppose, will be claimed as its brightest figure. But Corot, as we have agreed, is too great to be claimed by any group.

A passion for nature is notoriously a characteristic, and the expression of that passion an

achievement of the nineteenth century: also, the achievement can be divided into stages. Whether you compare Gray's description of an evening scene with Matthew Arnold's, 'The Elegy' with 'Thyrsis,' or a landscape by Cuyp with a Sisley, you cannot fail to notice that between them lies the invention and perfection of an instrument. Gray and Jean-Jacques in the second half of the eighteenth century had found themselves with an instrument hardly adequate to express all that they felt. To say that the Lake poets, Scott, Chateaubriand and Senancourt perfected this instrument would be absurd; they, like Constable, invented new ones. While George Sand, George Eliot, Flaubert, Tennyson, Barbizon, and finally the Impressionists endowed their age with so bulging a tool-bag that the first business of the Post-Impressionists — painters, poets, and novelists — was to eliminate and simplify. If Constable found the instruments of landscape-painting inadequate, Cézanne found them so complicated that their mere manipulation was a whole-time job.

The Barbizon painters, for all their integrity, remind one painfully of the mid-century novelists. From Constable and the early romantic writers they had learnt to observe, and observe they did. They noticed a thousand things which appeared to have escaped the masters; and they spared the public hardly one of them. Even

Corot, giving lessons to a deaf student, wrote first the word, CONSCIENCE, and proceeded to underline it ten times: it was the moment of his life at which he came nearest to being of the school. Rousseau loves nature and accumulates facts about her with the remorseless patience of George Sand. It is the age of the itinerant artist. Painters preoccupied with local colour and parochial costume come into fashion along with the regional romancers. Poussin, sitting solidly in Rome, could paint his great scenes from the Old Testament, camels and all, and Gibbon went no further afield to describe the whole history of the Eastern Empire; but Carlyle must inspect the farm-yards about Naseby, Flaubert will not venture to begin *Salammbô* till he has seen the spot where Carthage was, and Mr. Holman Hunt spent years on the Dead Sea-shore in earnest pursuit of his scapegoat. The indispensable quantum of nobility and sentiment was unluckily contributed by the best painter of the school, if we except Corot; and these irrelevances jar as disagreeably in the compositions of that good draughtsman Millet as they do in those of the great novelist George Eliot. Millet is as conscious of his honourable independence as any English hedgerow painter or as one of his own peasants. Again and again an excellent design is sacrificed to the irrelevant self-assertion of some heroic pig-minder; again and again we,

foolishly irritable spectators, allow a consequent weakness in the whole to blind us to beauties of detail. We should be lost in admiration before the masterly drawing of the figures in *Les Glaneuses* were it not that the artist's determination to surround these humble folk with a sense of 'the grand for ever' and 'the great beyond' retains us safely on mid-Victorian earth and renders the composition slightly ridiculous.

Yet, with all his nasty faults, his tiresome sentiment and self-complacency, his wilfully deteriorated design, his muddled colour (Millet never, or rarely, discovered harmonies adequate to his conceptions), Jean-François Millet must, I think, be reckoned a good painter. He was, if we exclude Corot, certainly the best of his bunch. Indeed, like Corot, he is perhaps too good to be reckoned of any. In his finest drawings at any rate, too much excited by the act of creation, of inventing an equivalent and giving significance to form, to be scrupulous about details, we find him eliminating, deforming, and synthesizing with the best. Forgetful of social injustice and the curse on Adam, the importance of minute description and fidelity to facts, he is simply an artist : which is more, I think, than can ever be said for Théodore Rousseau.

Rousseau was one of those conscientious and acute persons, never uncommon and in the nineteenth century conspicuous, who seem to have

been born without temperament. Starting from Ruysdael, he noticed about nature a thousand facts which the Dutchman had either not noticed or not cared to mention, and contrived or perfected means for stating them all. What he could not do was to give them cohesion, for that is obtained only under pressure of creation. He was a magnificent observer, unable to mark for his own what he observed, who accumulated facts which he could neither pen nor brand. His pictures are uninspired. The longer he lived the less he seemed capable of making anything better than accurately observed transcriptions, surprising at the time, original indeed, precisely by reason of this unfamiliar accuracy. The faithful servant of nature, he followed her, as Fromentin says, 'from the plain to the mountain.' But fidelity, like other virtues, is not enough. Without ever sinking to the level of Daubigny, who seems to have produced pictures as Lord Leverhulme did soap, he repeats himself drearily. It is not, assuredly, that all bear the image of a too insistent character, nor yet that all are products of one recipe—the source of Daubigny's monotony—but that all are the faithful records of one pair of honest eyes with nothing various behind them, nothing but competence and good will.

If, however, we agree that Corot is too big, and Millet too personal, to be contained in this

school, we must recognize Théodore Rousseau as chief. He is the member for Barbizon. Lacking, as he does, all those violent personal characteristics which invariably modify and sometimes obliterate the pattern imposed by a doctrine, he makes an admirable representative. From a study of his conscientious work we may best learn what Barbizon stands for in the history of modern painting. Historically, its interest lies in the fact that it made of Constable's splendid, but idiosyncratic and untidy, vernacular a polished and teachable language in which any competent student might learn to state what he had learnt to observe ; its importance in the fact that it opened the way to Impressionism. The Impressionists, like good traditional children, denied their parents. Barbizon—Corot even—disapproved of its offspring. But without the contribution of the school of sensations, the Impressionists must have wasted precious years discovering rudiments from which was to be evolved an idiom capable of expressing the beauty of the modern world and the fullness thereof.

(*Photo: Braun*)

Corot. L'Atelier

THE TWO COROTS

MODERN psychologists, with their taste for dual personality and all that, might do worse than turn their attention to the case of Jean-Baptiste Corot. How comes it that the man who produced fifty, I suppose, of the best pictures of the century, produced some hundreds of, if not the worst, at least a deplorable badness? None of the convenient explanations quite does. It is true that before 1840—he began painting seriously in '22—Corot produced, so far as I know, nothing detestable, and in his middle, sometimes called his 'studio' period, little; but it is not true that in the last fifteen years of his life he produced nothing else. In the last fifteen years of his life he painted many of his finest figures, and his figures are perhaps his finest pictures. Nor is it quite true that after 1860 he painted no good landscapes. *Le Beffroi de Douai* (collection Moreau-Nélaton, Arts décoratifs) is dated 1871.

Le Beffroi de Douai and the late figures suffice to prove that age alone will not account for the general deterioration of his output. Success, I think, accounts for much. Corot was the least avaricious of men, but he valued money for some of the things that money will buy—the bare necessities and modest comforts of one's friends for instance. Surely it was worth

knocking off one of those trashy little idylls that M. Chauchard [1] could never resist when by so doing Daumier,[2] old, penniless, and blind, could be saved from eviction? Corot, when he became a best seller, took to boiling other people's pots. For his figures there was never a market, during his life Corot was never taken seriously as a portrait-painter; wherefore to the end he painted figures, not for the MM. Chauchards of two hemispheres, but for him for whom he had painted Italian landscapes from '25 to '35, for himself, or, as I am tempted to say, for 'his better self.' How different was the spirit in which he painted his figures from that in which he painted his fluffy idylls may be conjectured from this recorded saying of his: 'Je peins une poitrine de femme tout comme je peindrais une boîte au lait.' Forty years later

[1] M. Chauchard, director and founder of Les Grands Magasins du Louvre, bequeathed to the Musée of that name a collection of some thirty Corots, amongst which—such was the certainty of his taste—there is not a single first-rate picture.

[2] In 1872 — on his sixty-fifth birthday — Daumier, threatened at once with eviction and blindness, received the title-deed of his house at Valmondois accompanied by this note: 'Mon vieux camarade, j'avais à Valmondois, près de l'Isle-Adam, une maisonnette dont je ne sais que faire. Il m'est venu à l'idée de te l'offrir et, comme j'ai trouvé l'idée bonne, je suis allé la faire enregistrer chez le notaire. Ce n'est pas pour toi que je fais ça, c'est pour embêter ton propriétaire. À toi.—Corot.'

when Marquet said the same thing the idealists were up in arms ; and the Chauchards have been idealists always.

Still the question remains : how could the Corot who was painting those amazing figures —*La Dame en Bleu* is dated 1874—paint those otherwise amazing nymph-ridden glades ? The only answer I can suggest, and I am too little a psychologist to do more than suggest, is that there were two Corots, Corot the great painter and Corot the brave bourgeois of the rue du Bac. Unluckily, that answer raises a further question — a question that certainly ought to be answered but will not be answered easily : Is painting a knack, or is it the expression of a mind ? Is to be a great painter like being a great cricketer ; or must a great painter, somehow or other, be spiritually (I use the word as opposed to mechanically) great ? On the first hypothesis there is no mystery about the feeblest productions of the greatest artists : sometimes his knack fails him and Hobbs gets out for a duck. On the second it seems strange that a great man should ever look quite so small as Corot looks frequently : stranger still that during a period of fifteen years or more he should sprinkle miseries with masterpieces, for all the world as though painting great pictures were for him a matter of chance.

Obviously a painter must have knack : to me

it appears not less obvious that the valuable painter uses knack to externalize something in himself other than knack. When the product is great it is generally assumed that the thing externalized must have been great also ; but to me that assumption seems illegitimate. Might not a great power of externalization (knack) so externalize a small thing as to give a splendid result ? I shall not even attempt to answer that question. When Corot failed I believe he was using his knack to externalize something not small but unreal : he was grinding without grist. And on such occasions, it is not surprising if knack, having nothing to work on, played truant. The stimulus being unreal the reaction was half-hearted. In youth notoriously an artist, poet or painter, finds in his own enthusiastic experience an adequate motive. That will account for Corot's first and best period. Later, maybe, an artist needs a third quality, besides enthusiasm and knack, a quality which selects and conditions motives, which distinguishes the genuine from the plausible, a quality which —to invoke a helpful colloquialism—gets the best out of a man. This third partner not only finds a problem to bring together knack and emotion, not only trims and tests experience before handing it over for realization to the craftsman, but keeps a guiding hand on the craftsman himself, so much so that, I regret to

say, when no genuine emotion has been engendered, it can teach mere knack so to feign the airs of inspired knack as to deceive the very elect. This is the power in which I suspect Corot of deficiency. It is called intellect.

Corot was a rather stupid man and an instinctive painter. Few of those recorded sayings of his about values and conscience and what not are interesting, and many are quite silly. Some of his maxims go clean contrary to his practice; for he talked like poor Poll though he painted like an angel. When he was young he was adequately stimulated by what he saw, and the difficulty of rendering his passionate and personal vision evoked all his gift of expression. But as he grew older and more at ease with his proper experience, he had, or rather thought he had, to lace his genuine and genial reactions (I use the epithet in both the French and English sense) with something grander—with a dash of mythology or literature. The drug was spurious too. All this about Theocritus and Virgil is the purest bunkum. It was as much as the master could do to get through a few chapters of Balzac or pages of Hugo in a twelvemonth. Only when he painted the figure did he feel no call to vamp up a more elevated state of mind than he was capable of experiencing naturally. Only before that problem did he remain always young and candid. For human

beings he asked himself to feel only what he felt for a *boîte au lait*, only what he had felt for La Trinità dei Monti or Chartres cathedral—an exquisitely pure and intense passion engendered by the eyes. Manifestly M. Chauchard needed something better.

A cleverer man would never so have deceived himself. But Corot was stupid and modest and willing to believe what dealers and patrons and inferior painters told him about the importance of ideas in art and the supreme beauty of the classical dictionary. A cleverer man, being capable of self-criticism, would have understood that the dew-drenched nymphs and matutinal pixies meant no more to him than a yellow primrose did to Peter Bell. A cleverer man would never have suffered himself to be imposed upon by Daubigny.

Daubigny, twenty years his junior and a mediocre painter to boot, professed for Corot an honourable admiration, sought him out, and, incredible as it may appear, had on the modest and uncritical master an immense and lamentable effect. Up to the middle of his life the predominant influence on the art of Corot had been Claude. Claude had imposed a severe, a compressed if not tight, style on the expansive lyricism of the Parisian romantic, which not Michallon, nor Delacroix, nor all the school of Barbizon had been able to loosen. In his first

Roman period, for instance, always it is the contour that interests him : colour he uses strictly to further his design. ' Ce que je cherche, c'est la forme, l'ensemble, la valeur des tons : la couleur, pour moi, vient après ' : which being so, in 1835 that eminent critic and Egyptologist M. Lenormant naturally felt moved to complain that ' M. Corot ne parle la langue du paysage qu'en bégayant : sa touche est lourde et mate : la souplesse, l'humidité, le charme de la nature lui sont étrangers.' Daubigny seems to have rubbed this criticism in. He loosened the master's style, enabling him to alternate henceforth—only in his landscapes be it understood —between fluency and fluffiness. He handed him a recipe for making pictures. Often it is said that Corot became feeble in his later years because he became poetical. In a sense he was poetical always : but if for ' poetical ' you read ' literary,' the criticism is just, so far as it goes. His landscapes became feeble because they became insincere ; and they became insincere because sometimes he was trying to express sentiments not his own, at others nothing at all. He became mechanical. And it was Daubigny who taught him the trade of mass-production. Was ever such a case of *détournement d'un majeur* ?

It is fashionable to say that an artist ought not to be too intelligent—I dare say I have said

it myself; in any case, like other fashions it is absurd. That by pure intellect you cannot create a work of art is true enough: but as a retriever—to say nothing of horse-breaker—the intellect is invaluable. No more than any one else can an artist be too intelligent. Had Corot had more wits about him he would early have recognized the nature of his genius and, knowing what food suited it, would have snapped his fingers at the quacks. He had miraculous vision, a superb painting gift, and limited imagination. He saw what no one else could see; and from what he saw he could extract all that he could express, which was more than almost any one else could have expressed. The problem that suited him was the problem that kept his gift fully employed translating his vision. Now to assimilate into vision a number of facts perceived with the mind's rather than the body's eye is not impossible; but it requires the imagination of a Giotto or a Rembrandt. This truth appears to have been known to another great painter of limited imagination, Renoir, who, when he has a mind to give us a *Judgment of Paris*, takes care to pose his favourite models in the familiar landscape of Provence. But Corot, when he set himself to turn the woods of Ville d'Avray into Arcady, seems really to have supposed that the problem must be changed. I must—he seems

to have said—at once paint a picture and render a peculiarly subtle, literary mood. I must be Corot and Theocritus at the same time. Giorgione might have done it. But Corot, before such a problem, is no longer a painter before a *boîte au lait*, but a lower-form boy before a dictionary and a poem by Tennyson to be turned into elegiacs. Well, the boy knows how to deal with his problem: 'You must have a trick,' he says. Corot, alas! had one too. Trees in Arcady are more feathery than in the Ile-de-France, pools more misty and mysterious, young ladies more diaphanous and indecisive, and the whole is steeped in 'the light that never was.' There 's a picture for you. Yes, but not an early Corot.

THE ANONYMOUS MASTER

THACKERAY, so far as I know, was the first to raise an authoritative voice in his favour. Constantin Guys was furious. He was afflicted with what modern psychologists—should the malady ever come their way—would call klytophobia—horror of publicity. And so, when, in 1863, Baudelaire wrote for *Le Figaro* his memorable study, he took the precaution—indeed it was forced on him—of concealing the identity of his subject under initials, Monsieur G. or Monsieur C. G. *le peintre de la vie moderne.* And so, when, after lying for seven years paralysed and almost quite alone in the hospice Dubois, he died in the spring of 1892, the world—a few nurses, servants, and undertaker's men—knew only that there was one nonagenarian less in the world.

Yet Guys is one of the great artists of the nineteenth century ; besides being a precursor of Impressionism, or rather, as I shall try to show, of one side of it. Born at Flushing of French parents, at a time when the Low Countries were within the French hegemony, in December 1802, to be exact, he acquired—appropriately enough, seeing that his father was a naval commissary—the roving habits of an adventurous age. He was in Greece with Byron ; can no Byronian, not Mr. Nicolson even, give us a

(*Photo: Druet*)

Drawing

Guys.

glimpse of him there? Later, but before the July revolution, we find him in a French cavalry regiment, risen to the rank of *sous-officier*; then in England, working for the *Illustrated London News*, traversing for that important paper almost all south-eastern Europe, and in 1854 going as its special correspondent to the Crimea. In his admirable study M. Gustave Geffroy asserts, apparently on the authority of Nadar, on the best, that is to say, that Guys drew for *Punch*. If so, it must have been in early days—before 1850 presumably. I am not so familiar with *Punch* as perhaps I should be; but I feel sure there are people who could decide, on documentary evidence, which drawings—if any—are to be ascribed to the French artist. They will be in his commercial and more conventional manner, and they will not be signed; anonymity, you remember, was his mania. Will no volunteer step forward?

But, whether or no he worked for *Punch*, certain it is that till 1856 London was the centre from which radiated his astonishing and prolific talent. Not only was the *Illustrated London News* his prop, English civilization was his theme and diversion. It was not till after the war, till '56 or '57, that he became Parisian. And always, as the de Goncourts note, he kept something of his English air along with his admiration for the life of the English

rich.[1] Indeed, you might almost have taken him in late middle-age for one of those superbly vigorous retired English colonels—real, pre-war colonels, I mean; short, red-faced, white-moustached, with clear, alert eyes and rapid, nervous movements; energetic and cultivated, but parading their energy and concealing their culture, concealing, indeed, everything about them that was delicate and therefore easily wounded. 'Aux engagements des armées alliées,' says Nadar, [Guys était] 'toujours aux avant-postes, avec la glaciale indifférence au danger, de nature autant que par dandysme.' One would emend: 'par dandysme autant que de nature'—at least I never heard any one suggest that the French were not naturally brave. Anyhow, Guys, who passed for an eccentric in Paris, would, with his combination of reticence and energy, his disregard

[1] '*Avril* 23, 1858.—Nous revenons de chez Gavarni avec Guys, le dessinateur de l'*Illustrated London* . . . mille souvenirs qu'il évoque dans cette promenade, où il jette, de temps en temps, des poignées d'ironies, des croquis, des paysages, des villes trouées de boulets, saignantes, éventrées, des ambulances où les rats entament les blessés . . . et c'est le château anglais, la haute futaie, la chasse, trois toilettes par jour et bal tous les soirs, une vie royale menée, conduite, payée par un monsieur qui s'appelle Simpson ou Tompson, et dont le fils de vingt ans inspecte dans la Méditerranée les 18 bateaux de son père, dont pas un n'a moins de deux mille tonneaux " une flotte comme l'Egypte n'en a jamais eu," dit Guys.'

of the *convenu* and the *inadmissible*, and his habit of making the least of himself, perhaps have seemed less odd to us. Only his art—not his pot-boilers, mind you, but his art—would have struck people here as paradoxical and improper.

That art—aquarelles, sepias, and lavis—is something as original in its way as the etching of Rembrandt, and as delicious sometimes as the painting of Rubens: also, it was something completely new, something that could not well have existed before the middle of the nineteenth century. While that superb traditionalist Courbet was prattling puerile nonsense about Realism, here was the master Realist passing unnoticed beneath his majestic nose. Guys was a Realist before the Impressionists in the sense in which they were realists; that is why I call him a precursor. The saying that he accepted life frankly is something less than half the truth and a cliché to boot. He accepted it as a treat, not necessarily to live, but to watch. And he accepted it whole. For Guys, the artist, once it was a question of life, the terms 'virtuous' and 'wicked,' 'pleasant' and 'disagreeable,' 'ugly' and 'beautiful,' had no meaning whatever. He neither approves nor disapproves; he does not criticize: not even does he comment: he states. But his statement is, of course, the expression of a vivid, a tense apprehension. Unlike the caricaturists, he never condemns; no Daumier he, to satirize, abuse, or

extol. He is perfectly impartial. Unlike the sentimentalists, a Greuze for instance, he neither pities nor commends. He is not humorous in the manner of the Dutch. He is not sly, he is not indignant, he is not edifying, he is not amused; he is neither saddened nor elated by the spectacle of life. He is fascinated. No one can pretend that he takes sides. He adopts the same attitude to the charge of the Light Brigade and the hospital at Pera; to a duchess in her calèche, the coachman on the box, and the horses between the traces; to S.M. la reine Victoria à l'Exposition de 1869 and to the Bal Mabille; to an expensive *demi-mondaine* with her banker and the girls in a seamen's brothel: all have for him æsthetic significance, all are morally indifferent. All were parts of that brilliant, agitating, contemporary life which thrilled him. Precisely to render that thrill was his business, or rather his vocation.

And to render this essentially modern thrill an essentially modern technique was needed. That technique Guys evolved unaided. He was, they say, completely untaught; and though I have seen it written that he was influenced by Goya, I must confess myself unable to discover the place where that influence is to be found—assuredly not in his style. He owes nothing to his great contemporary, Daumier, nor to his charming contemporary, Gavarni; the one depended

still on the tradition of the Renaissance, the other on that tradition tempered by the eighteenth century. For his declamatory and censorious purposes the style of the high Renaissance, of Rembrandt especially, suited Daumier well enough. Daumier was in the habit of pondering his conceptions; and it was a conception his brush had to express, not a sensation that it had to capture. But Guys, who hurried back to his attic to realize the vision while it was yet fever-hot, needed something quicker. Guys who, as Baudelaire said, 'cherchait partout la beauté passagère, fugace, de la vie présente,' needed something at once rapid and irremediable. And he found it. He invented that nervous, broken, and infinitely telling shorthand which was to become the foundation of the graphic side of Impressionism. With pictural Impressionism, with the division of tones and the scientific palette, he had nothing to do; though I can think of one drawing at least, *La Dame au Chapeau Bleu* (Musée de la Ville de Paris), wherein he used colour as twenty years later Renoir might have used it. But of impressionist illustration, of Degas, Lautrec, Forain, he is the master. Without Guys that essentially modern reaction to contemporary life, that passionate but impartial preoccupation with the actual, could never have been rendered in line. Visually he is the master of us all.

It is tempting—and a temptation seldom resisted—to compare Constantin Guys with the contemporary Realists of literature, Zola, Edmond de Goncourt, Paul Alexis. Nevertheless, the connection is superficial, since it is mainly one of subject. The elegant vices, extravagances, and miseries of the Second Empire have for our age so great a charm that to-day Zola and Guys find plenty of admirers who care little or nothing for writing or drawing. To such these two may seem to have a good deal in common; but Guys stands to lose heavily by their crude appreciation. Rob him of his art and he sinks to the level of Forain. For Guys fulfils Zola's requirement: his work is a vision of life—of a part of it—seen through a temperament. But in that too famous definition the term which counts and remains a little obscure is the last. If we say that Guys had the temperament of an artist because he reacted passionately to what he perceived subtly and distinctly, we must add that Zola's perceptions, sharp as they were, led more often to generalization than expression. His reactions, to say nothing of his medium, were not sufficiently artistic to make him a match for Guys. Of the others, Edmond de Goncourt and Paul Alexis are too feeble to stand the comparison; while Flaubert is too great, besides being, like Maupassant, essentially a classical stylist. Possibly the seeker after a literary

equivalent would do better to turn from recognized letters and glance down the columns of high-class reporting. After all, Guys was an illustrator. He was concerned, as to a less extent were Daumier and Gavarni, with the rendering of actuality. And to that end he invented his new language, entirely independent of the plastic tradition, of an amazing expressiveness, flexible, precise, and, above all, rapid. Did no journalist do the same sort of thing for the rendering of the passing show in words?

In journalism, as in the respectable arts, during the first half of the nineteenth century traditionalism held the field. The 'Oxonienses' and the 'Nunquam dormios' were still describing boxing matches and race meetings in a style that had admirably served Virgil, engaged on a similar task; while at the end of the eighteenth Nercia and his like would render their sense of a debauch in what passed for the language of Fénelon. Grant that Zola, the de Goncourts, and their school, feeling the incongruity, or rather the insincerity, did attempt to discover a medium more pliant that would fit a little closer to the truth as they perceived it; they remained—may the ghost of Sainte-Beuve not haunt me for the word—they remained traditional still. They remained 'legitimate writers.' They never did what Guys did. They never broke up the traditional phrase and

paragraph with a view to catching the bubbles on life as they swirled by. Not of Zola would Gautier have said as he said of Guys—whom he admired profoundly: 'Il n'était pas ce que régulièrement on appelle un artiste.' So, though during the last eighty years literature has not lacked for bold and intelligent experimenters, the equivalent for Guys—the impartial observer of the surface of life, bold enough to create a style exactly suited to his novel purpose, artist enough to achieve in the process unlooked-for beauty—is, I fancy, missing. And now that Proust has revealed a method of rendering at once a sense of the surface, the depths, and the overhanging atmosphere, it may be doubted whether these many years any writer will care to set himself the smaller problem which Guys so deliciously solved.

Burne Jones. The Golden Stairs

THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

IN 1851, the year of Turner's death, English painting needed a revolution badly. In the land of Constable no artist had arisen to carry on and enrich the tradition ; it was across the Channel that the good English seed was bearing its crop. Here Victoria was firmly on her throne, and her Academy was settling down to the profitable business of producing those nasty and not even efficient imitations of chromo-photographs which were to hold the market for the rest of the century. A rebellious movement was due ; and the movement came.[1] That it

[1] It must not be supposed, however, that Pre-Raphaelism was a new idea. The German movement early in the century—the movement of Overbeck and Orsel—had professed Pre-Raphaelite doctrines ; and even earlier an admiration for the Christian Primitives, based on moral and religious considerations, was current. 'Corinne pensait que l'expression des peintres modernes, en général, était souvent théâtrale ; qu'elle avait l'empreinte de leur siècle, où l'on ne connaissait plus, comme André Mantègne, Perugin, et Léonard de Vinci, cette unité d'existence, ce naturel dans la manière d'être, qui tient encore du repos antique. Mais à ce repos est unie la profondeur de sentiments qui caractérise le christianisme,' etc., etc. (*Corinne*, viii. 3.)

Again : 'Dans ces tableaux du quatorzième et du quinzième siècle (Madame de Staël is here writing of German painting) les plis des vêtements sont tout droits ; les coiffures un peu roides, les attitudes très-simples ; mais il y a quelque chose dans l'expression des figures qu'on ne se lasse point de considérer. Les tableaux inspirés par la religion

took the slightly ludicrous form of a sermon at a tea-party is not surprising nor of much account. What is surprising and rather a pity is that, the surface of a cup or two having been ruffled in the heat of argument presumably, a smear was left behind which to this day defiles British painting.

Let no one, however, in a mood of patriotic irritation, forget that intentionally the movement was most honourable. It was a revolt of spirit against matter. The Pre-Raphaelites, horrified by the smug banality of what passed with contemporary painters and their patrons for art, asserted, truly enough, that art was something which made much higher demands on both producer and spectator. For the best of these popular producers the best that could be said was that they were experienced cooks; for their patrons, that a few were knowing gluttons. On this replete and self-satisfied community burst the band of brothers, proclaiming that art was concerned with the sublimest states of mind, that to create it not all the blood and tears of the prophets were more than sufficient, and that even to appreciate it a man must be capable of intense and painful effort. Like the Impressionists, later, they attacked the official

chrétienne produisent une impression semblable à celle de ces psaumes qui mêlent avec tant de charme la poésie à la piété.' (*De l'Allemagne*, ii. 32.)

schools, suspecting justly that these taught little but cooking, and for Mrs. Beeton inculcated a purely superstitious reverence. Wherefore, in early days (the Pre-Raphaelite movement, like all others, gradually lost with its passion its honesty) they were for a kind of simplification. Certainly they introduced technical processes as tedious and insignificant as the old ; which is not surprising when one considers that to the Pre-Raphaelite mind industry and scrupulous attention seemed good in themselves. But the *cuisine* of oil-painting, inherited through Lawrence and Reynolds from the late Renaissance, they denounced and abandoned. To this extent they simplified. But to what end ? Why, to make room for communication, of course. Communication of what ? Of great ideas, to be sure, of opinions, of moral and religious sentiments. Painters should do in line what Mr. Ruskin and Carlyle were doing in words. Perhaps it is not surprising, seeing that not one of them really was a painter—no, not Rossetti, who was a poet—that it should never have entered the head of a brother of them that what painters have to do is not to convey sentiments about morals and religion, but to create forms which have an emotional significance of their own.

The Pre-Raphaelites, having decided that they would not be as the popular men were, but

would deal, like the poets and prophets, in high-class notions, had no need to bother about choosing a spiritual field in which to operate. That was indicated by their era. England was in full romantic swing towards the age of faith, the middle age as the more chronologically minded called it. Everywhere the faithful body of England was bursting out in those prodigious pustules known as nineteenth-century Gothic —the only style of architecture, I venture to predict, which no future generation will ever take as anything but a lamentable joke. Could not the painters do their bit ? To be sure they could ; they could imitate the pictures of the fifteenth century. It is, I think, a notable fact, not in the history of art only, but in the history of the human mind, that there should have been an age—an active and prolific one—which felt no need for a style of its own, but set itself passionately to copy that of another. Remark that the neo-Gothic architects did not attempt, as vulgar *pasticheurs* in every age attempt, by gingering up old forms to give themselves an air of being original. They did not even pretend to express themselves: they simply copied. That they failed hopelessly to catch a likeness is neither here nor there. But what can have been in the minds of those Victorian men and women, intelligent and capable in many ways, who believed that a nineteenth-century archi-

tect could genuinely express his peculiar temperament by copying a fourteenth-century church? Or did they not believe in expression? Did it never enter their heads that to give a modern artist a picture by Botticelli and tell him to express himself in that was about as reasonable as to unwrap the mummy of Cleopatra and bid him take her to wife?

The Pre-Raphaelites, themselves, were not much troubled by these questions. They had no notion of using the forms of *quattrocento* painters to express plastic conceptions or provoke æsthetic emotions: like some modern psychologists, apparently, they had not heard that such things exist. They were going to use forms for greater ends, to convey ideas. They would use them as symbols, in fact. And this brings us abruptly to the heart of the matter, to what accounts for the importance of the Pre-Raphaelites to their age and country and their utter insignificance in the history of European culture. The Pre-Raphaelites were not painters; but they took life seriously. They took little joy in seeing, and less in the problems of plastic expression; they had neither pride of the eye nor a lust of paint. But they took an intelligent interest in the live intellectual questions of their day; they were concerned for the outcome of genuine spiritual issues. And because they were manual craftsmen they ap-

proached these questions from an angle slightly different from that of the writers, different enough, at all events, to make their views seem to the writers peculiar and interesting. Essentially the Pre-Raphaelites were didactic pamphleteers, minor poets, or little historians : ask an admirer of their pictures to tell you exactly what he finds in one of them, and you will notice that all he has to say might just as well be said of a book. As for the Italian Primitives, with their passion for form and divine sense of decoration, they were good painters because they were good men. Ruskin had said it. Also some of them had painted on their knees ; but few of the brotherhood, I believe, went so far as that.

From them, however, the Pre-Raphaelites learnt something which they made the centre of their dogma. The eighteenth-century tradition of painting, which in France had been broken by David, while in England it was being developed and illustrated by Constable, was to paint broadly, which is only a technical way of saying that artists were concerned with their vision of things and not with each thing in its individual exactitude. There can be no doubt that the Primitives did try to paint things as they were, or rather as they believed they were, and not as they appeared. And in this the Pre-Raphaelites imitated them. Only, whereas

the Primitives subordinated their conscientious preoccupations to an æsthetic intention—to creating beauty—the Pre-Raphaelites subordinated theirs to an intellectual—to making statements.

Though the Pre-Raphaelites were silly, they were not stupid. Now belief in representation, as the public understands it, is the infallible sign of a dolt : symbolism, on the other hand, is the natural refuge of any one who takes to art without being an artist. Be he ever so little an artist, the humblest illustrator of a tale, called upon to render something mysterious going forward at the 'witching hour,' will try to express his sense of it by plastic means—by crude chiaroscuro or, if he be a little subtler, by some quality of line, mass, or movement : the symbolist, on the other hand, will set in a conspicuous position a clock with its hands firmly planted at twelve. That was the Pre-Raphaelite way ; to that end they employed, or were pleased to suppose that they were employing, the manner of the Florentines —of the Florentines who never drew an arabesque without æsthetic intention. But, manifestly, when your object is to point a moral by recounting a tale, and when the intelligibility of that tale hangs most likely on a detail, a composition consisting of descriptive outlines is to be preferred to an intricate harmony of colours and volumes, from which an æsthetic

intention can emerge, but amongst which the hands of a significant clock may well escape notice. As those rare Englishmen who have succeeded in finding for their vision a plastic equivalent have found it almost always in the bold manipulation of paint, the Pre-Raphaelites, as they niggled at their edges and outlines, were cutting loose from the national tradition. Had they painted good pictures, no one in his senses would have complained of that. But to achieve nothing, and set a bad example to boot, is to make the worst of both worlds with a vengeance.

The reason why the Pre-Raphaelite output is worthless is not that the band of brothers broke with the English tradition, nor yet that they tried to hitch on to the middle ages, but that the root of the matter was not in them. Not one of them was a painter : Rossetti was a poet with a sense of design, which shows itself occasionally in his water-colours ; Ford Madox Brown had a certain rude energy for which, not being an artist, he could devise no plastic equivalent. Taken as a group, for all their fine theories, they were not much superior, once they got brushes between their fingers, to the popular duffers they despised. Only they were conscientious and hard-working. They laboured to represent faithfully the outlines of every detail in a given space, but they never conceived

of space as a plastic unity in three dimensions, with an æsthetic value of its own, to be rendered frankly in paint. What they all lacked was that peculiar and passionate reaction to the thing seen which translates itself spontaneously into an artistic vision, and clamours for a form in which to exist independently. They lacked the reaction which sets all the machinery in motion, lacking which a man, though he produce innumerable pictures, will never create a work of art. That is why I say the root of the matter was not in them.

However, the bleak singularity of their canvases appealed strongly to the more serious and cultivated of their contemporaries and compatriots. These approved, partly because the Pre-Raphaelites, by adopting a simulacrum of the Florentine style, gave to their work a false air of precision and scholarship, partly because there seemed to be something admirable about their earnest pursuit of the fact, about the brittle dryness of their outlines, about the crowded emptiness of their compositions and the elevating and instructive nature of their subjects. 'La ligne c'est l'honneur, c'est la probité même,' shrieked Ingres in a rage with Delacroix. Yes, but then the line of Ingres was expressive, that of the Pre-Raphaelites descriptive merely. Nevertheless, it was, I suspect, the moral quality of their line which gave them

prestige with their contemporaries, and perhaps it is that, more than anything else, which gives them influence still. They passed for innovators and inventors, expressing the new spirit of a new age; while all the time Courbet was creating the art of the mid-century, while Manet and the Impressionists were starting a movement which was to modify the great European tradition, of which it was to become a glorious part. But the sages of Chelsea and Hammersmith turned aside from the awful spectacle . . . or if they noticed, reprobated. These Realists and Impressionists were not only bad painters but bad men—bad painters rather because bad men. The Pre-Raphaelites stuck to their faithful details and didactic symbols; and they, too, left their mark.

On the European tradition they made not the slightest impression; but they are the unnatural parents of the English school in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, and to this day their characteristics persist. Their influence has been powerful enough to put on the wrong track a number of promising young painters. English painting, such as it is, is broad and coloured or nothing. Our paint is our patrimony. Was it not Constable who imposed colour on France, liberating her artists from the tyranny of David? Wherefore, of the many reasons for being grateful to that gallant

band of painters who compose the London group, I count not least their respect for the older tradition—the tradition of Hogarth, Gainsborough, Constable—and their rejection of that Victorian incubus Pre-Raphaelism.

DAUMIER

IF only that poetic glazier, Daumier père, had stuck to the shop and made a little money, if only Honoré had succeeded to those 'bienheureuses petites rentes,' Europe might have been the richer by a painter of the first magnitude. Honoré Daumier takes his place—has taken it since the *centennale* of 1900 at any rate—with the masters of the nineteenth century; and you may, if you like, measure him beside the greatest of all time, beside Giotto, Raphael, Rubens; only, of one so measuring the devil's advocate will inquire, 'And where are the masterpieces?' Fashionable optimism, I know, maintains that he has expressed himself as fully in black and white as ever he could have done in colour. Possibly: I recall drawings, *Et dire que c'est aujourd'hui la Saint-Médard*, *Les Divorceuses*, *Le Charcutier*, as rich, in a sense as coloured, and as profoundly designed as anything he painted. These are exceptional however; not only had he no leisure for painting, he had barely time to draw his best. So he produced a few masterpieces (the adversary can be met), a mass of mere hackery, and innumerable drawings displaying qualities splendid but imperfectly elaborated or in part sacrificed to the lamentable exigences of illustration and emphasis. Most artists in his place must either have starved to

(*Photo: Librairie de France*)

Daumier.

Parade

death or made such concessions as would have robbed their work of all significances. Let us be thankful for what Daumier was able to give; let us be thankful that Delacroix, Corot, Manet, Pissarro, and Cézanne were parasites battening on the blood of the poor; and let us hear no more about it being good for artists to have to earn their living.

Daumier was born at Marseilles in 1808 and brought to Paris seven years later. His father, besides being a poet and a glazier, appears to have been a fool. He shook hands with the Crown Prince of Prussia and dedicated verses to the Tzar; which notwithstanding, he died extremely poor, and his son by sentiment and circumstances belonged all his life to the superior artisan class. This is important and unfortunate; for it kept him in want and politics, and the artist was not at his best when pot-boiling nor yet when inculcating democratic principles. He had learnt to draw in the Louvre from the high Renaissance masters, from Rembrandt, above all from classical sculpture [1]; and classical

[1] Daumier's education is mysterious. It seems probable that, properly speaking, he had none. He picked up the habit of observation in the streets and a technique in the Louvre. Lenoir tried to give him some lessons, and would set him down to draw a hand or an ear; to a born observer, who spent long, passionate days in the Louvre, such instruction seemed futile. He is said to have turned up occasionally at the Académie de Bourdin. One Ramelet

sculpture, as every one knows, classical poetry too for that matter, can be turned with bewildering ease into declamation. The ocean roll of Virgilian rhythm rolls and rolls on into Cornelian froth; the eloquence of Demosthenes becomes the rhetoric of Burke and at last the volubility of Mr. Winston Churchill; the Æginetan marbles swollen by gusts of Latin patriotism become *Le monument des Morts* of Bartholomé or that Victor Emanuel business on the Quirinal. Let an artist once forget that his function is neither to exhort nor to instruct nor to magnify, and a classical education may become a positive detriment. Occasionally Daumier forgot. Incidentally, his exhortation is frequently misplaced and his information misleading. He was not only a politician, but a poor one. Like most revolutionaries, he was a mass of popular illusions and lower-class prejudices: as much shocked by girls in bloomers as by the *coup d'état*, by blue silk stockings and adultery as by war-mongering and tyranny. He was a downright democrat. Unfortunately, the more political, the less significant his drawings became, and the more admirable in the eyes of M. Jules Michelet.

Daumier commenced caricaturist under Philipon of *La Caricature* with a series of

taught him the craft of lithography. There his education ends.

attacks on the Government of Louis-Philippe. As that Government is now reckoned the most beneficent that France has enjoyed since 1789, to any one who happens to take politics more seriously than art this beginning may well seem a bad one. And those even who take art more seriously may wish that, instead of railing at the king's circumspect liberalism, Daumier had ridiculed his ludicrous patronage. 'Alaux' observed le roi bourgeois 'peint bien et dessine bien; il n'est pas cher et il est coloriste.' But Daumier, though he drew almost always like an old master, outside the studio felt and thought like an 1830 Romantic. Guizot's excellent advice to his age—'Enrichissez-vous?'—struck him as the last word in prosaic banality. He could not be expected to see that the conquest of the world by industry—however deplorable in its consequences—was one of the romantic achievements of the nineteenth century. Daumier detested Guizot; he detested even more—(had he not, in '32, himself, of his own volition more or less, paid a brief and not too disagreeable visit to Sainte-Pélagie?)—the procureur-général Persil; which is amusing because the grim Père-Scie, as Daumier facetiously called him, was to produce in the third generation the genial and sympathetic Dunoyer de Segonzac.

In the vulgar sense of the word, Daumier was not a clever man; perhaps that is why he is not

a first-rate caricaturist. His drawings as a rule are not precisely amusing; they are too much works of art for that and too little illustrations. The legends under them are often tiresome, but that is not entirely Daumier's fault; he hardly ever wrote them. He could think of nothing to say; all he had to say having been said already in forms which admit of no verbal equivalent. Wherefore Philipon, or whoever the clever fellow might be whose duty it was to provide letterpress, finding himself in the critic's plight, criticwise said something irrelevant. An honest and innocent lover of caricature turning over the pages of one of those albums in which are collected the works of 'Our nineteenth-century humourists' will be more amused by Forain than by Daumier. Forain has a genius for *le mot injuste*. But take away the words and what remains? Skill, observation, next to nothing. Take the words from a Daumier and there remains—everything. And that everything is the fruit—not all ripe by any means—of a genius so impressive that it has left a mark on most of the great French painters of the last seventy years.[1]

[1] How much more Daumier was preoccupied in his caricatures with the form than the idea can hardly fail to strike the most casual observer: it is to his credit that, in making fun of the ancients, he never represents them smoking or climbing on to omnibuses as the common 'humourist' does invariably.

One need not be an artist or a critic even to see that sculpture counted for much in Daumier's education. Indeed, the realization of his vision in three dimensions seems in early days to have been a necessary step in his creative process. All the victims of that first, famous series of political caricatures, that *ventre législatif*, were rendered first in clay or wax, then drawn. Crouching in the strangers' gallery, the young revolutionary was not making pencil sketches, he was modelling. At home he drew from these figurines. No wonder the shadows are deep and the planes sharply accused. Also, it is, I suspect, to this sculpturesque conception of form that we must trace what seems to me Daumier's besetting sin. Sometimes, I cannot help feeling, in those dark places the form is lost. In a sculptured figure, no matter how black the shadow cast by the chin, the form, good, bad, or indifferent, must be continuous; the neck must be there or the head would fall off. Turn the shadow into paint or ink and the necessity disappears, and with it sometimes the form. Sometimes in Daumier's drawings and paintings splendid bravura covers a void; but a void there is—at least so it seems to me. The contour mounts majestically to the horizon, dips over the edge, vanishes, and reappears a little too much as if nothing had happened. This comes chiefly of being too sculpturesque, of paying in depreciated currency

the cast shadows of the third dimension; it comes also of a will to be impressive. To call an artist 'strong' is to pay him a doubtful compliment at best. That an artist should set himself to be strong is the devil.

'*Drawcansir.* You shall not know how long I here will stay;
But you shall know I 'll take your bowles away.
(Snatches the bowles out of the king's hands, and drinks 'em off.)
Mr. Smith. But, Mr. Bayes, is that modest? Is that gent?
Mr. Bayes. No, I gad, Sir, but it 's great.'

Besides being something over-sculpturesque, Daumier was occasionally 'great.' Who of the Romantics was not, occasionally? The worst of it is that once an artist, be he poet, painter, or musician, begins to ensue greatness he is likely to end in rhetoric, in substituting sound for sense, or desperate, dark shadows and whirling brush-work for form. *Le Bon Samaritain* in the Burrell Collection at the Tate is greatish; and so perhaps is that famous and admired drawing *La Soupe*. But Daumier was too sensible to become a slave to a romantic vice; and anyhow artists are to be judged by their best. Rather, I suspect, the ideal critic would never judge artists at all. He would criticize only particular works. And, while you are at the Tate, if you

will look at a panel (No. 20) *La Blanchisseuse* you will see a work of art by Daumier which is above criticism.[1]

[1] The Burrell Collection is no longer on view at the Tate, but there is reason to hope that *La Blanchisseuse* will return.

THE REALIST

ABOUT the year 1850 artistic opinion in France was divided between those who worshipped Ingres and those who preferred Delacroix: for Barbizon, with Corot and Millet, was regarded, in so far as it was regarded at all, as a province of the romantic left. The chiefs eyed each other with suspicion, choleric on the part of the old tyrant, on that of Delacroix urbane: Chassériau was attempting, not unsuccessfully, a syncretism: while the followers of both camps had duly fraternized over the plunder, though still calling each other, to keep up the excitement, by such hard names as *pompiers* and *farceurs*. It was time for a hearty quarrel; and manifestly the cue for any vulgar, pushing fellow who thought of picking it was to declare himself the enemy of both Ingres and Delacroix. Now Courbet, besides being one of the greatest painters of the century, was both vulgar and pushing, so he proclaimed himself a rebel and cried a plague on both houses. To be exact, he proclaimed himself, or allowed himself to be proclaimed, a Realist; and a Realist he was in the sense that Chardin, Teniers, or for that matter Homer, were Realists. However, the name was a good one, and he saw to it that it should stick. That it meant little or nothing never troubled Courbet. He was not

(*Photo : Archives du Louvre*)

Courbet. L'Atelier du peintre

in the habit of troubling much about 'meanings'—least of all about the meanings of words.

Courbet was a strapping young peasant from the Franche-Comté, radical and republican by tradition, and a born painter. He was moved by the solidity and freshness of his native rocks and glens, by all the gear of a small-holder's existence, by the rustic activities amongst which he had been brought up, and by the copious and often splendid forms of women in the class to which he belonged. By these inspired, he painted like an old master—like an old master literally; uninspired, he painted like a preternaturally royal academician. He claimed 'to give real nature with all her crudities and violences.' A camera could have done as much. Had he gone on to add, as well he might, that he converted 'real nature' into art, one could have replied that Homer had done the same three thousand years earlier. And why, pray, was a picture of a dead rabbit by Chardin less real than one of a dead roebuck by Monsieur Courbet?

Often when Courbet said he was a Realist he meant that he was a radical, which he sometimes called being a socialist. It was the greatest ass in Europe, Proudhon, who put this notion into his head. Proudhon was a socialist all right:—

> 'Dix mille citoyens qui ont appris le dessin forment une puissance de collectivité artistique,

> une force d'idées, une énergie d'idéal bien supérieure à celle d'un individu, et qui, trouvant un jour son expression, dépassera le chef-d'œuvre.' (*Principe de l'art.*)

Courbet, on the other hand, was an artist, and therefore an individualist. However, he found no difficulty in agreeing with Proudhon, to about one of whose words of wisdom he probably attended in every thousand. Besides, he made a habit of agreeing with people who praised him. So Proudhon was allowed to write a book in which he explained art by explaining that Courbet was the only great artist, and that he was a great artist because he was a pioneer of the Social Commonwealth; while Champfleury, Max Buchon, and Castagnary were all writing books or articles to explain why Courbet was a Realist. And to Courbet it all came to much the same thing; anyhow, all were working together for good. They were keeping Courbet in the public eye; and in the casino at Frankfort—according to Courbet—notices had to be posted: 'Ici, il est défendu de parler de M. Courbet.' For the rest, he was a thorough radical by temperament—by reason he was nothing. As a member of the Commune he showed more sense—less folly, at any rate—than most of his colleagues. He protected the Louvre, and would, apparently, have protected the Tuileries; and it does not much

matter whether or no he was responsible for pulling down the Vendôme Column. That he was persecuted by the Government of the Third Republic is not surprising; but that his pictures should have been excluded from public exhibition by his fellows, notwithstanding the protests of almost all the good artists in France and some of the bad, is the most natural thing in the world and a disgrace to humanity.[1] Courbet died miserably in exile at La Tour de Peilz just outside Vevey in 1877.

Courbet painted his first large picture, *Après-dîner à Ornans*, in 1849, and with it posed the question about which critics were to excite themselves for the next twenty years. It was a huge canvas, presenting a group of common people, a table, plates, glasses, fragments, Courbet's big dog. What—said the critics—what can justify a canvas of these dimensions being consecrated neither to religion, mythology, history, nor romance, but to a 'vulgar' subject? There is no justification. Monsieur Courbet is a Realist. Few thought it worth adding that the picture was superbly painted. But superbly painted it was, and that is its justification. Also, it is the justification of every successful work Courbet ever produced.[2]

[1] Meissonier was the leader of the anti-Courbet party.

[2] Delacroix even was shocked by Courbet's vulgarity. He was not blind to his power, however. Of *La Baigneuse*

They say it was Bonvin who induced the vainglorious cub with the magnificent, uncultivated gift, to go to the Louvre and copy. If so, it was Bonvin who did him the best turn he ever was done. Courbet learnt painting from the old masters: from Ribera, Velasquez, Rembrandt, and Hals especially. Possibly it was because they all could in a sense be considered realistic that he went to them; much more probably because they appealed to the painter that was in him. At any rate, since he unquestionably was a Realist, and since these appealed to him, it stood to reason that they were Realists too. They must have 'given real nature, with all her crudities and violences': them one could study without danger or shame. And when, happily inspired by his surroundings, he found means, through their style, of formalizing and externalizing his own vision, he firmly believed that he was being dreadfully realistic and rebellious. For certain it is that Courbet, perhaps the most eclectic of modern masters, the one who profited most by long days spent in galleries, believed himself the most spontaneous and unorthodox; that Courbet, the master of plastic manipulation, fancied himself uncom-

(*salon* 1853) he says, 'J'ai été étonné de la vigueur et de la saillie de son principal tableau.' Of the same picture Delécluze said, 'Cette créature est telle, qu'un crocodile n'en voudrait pas pour la manger.'

promisingly direct. Positively, it seems never to have entered his head that the pictures of Velasquez and Rembrandt were not faithful renderings of facts but of intense emotion for facts. Quite conceivably he believed that his own pictures were true to nature in the way of photographs.

Like Rembrandt and Velasquez, Courbet had a passion for facts — maybe less fine, less intense, than theirs, and certainly less constant. From them he learnt to snare and surround this passion in paint. He had little imagination and no critical sense; consequently, when passion failed, he became a Realist indeed —a Realist in the sense that the defter late Victorians (say Millais grown old) were Realists.[1] In the middle of a superbly conceived composition he would suddenly lose interest in a detail, or more probably lose hold of the authentic vision, and paint a stone or a branch, not as he felt it, but as he thought it should be. That is popular Realism—the rendering of objects as the grocer believes he sees them : and this 'realistic' detail by Courbet, detached from the whole, would not have looked too

[1] This Delacroix noticed. 'Quand Courbet a fait le fond de la femme qui se baigne (*La Baigneuse*, 1853), il l'a copié scrupuleusement d'après une étude que j'ai vue à côté de son chevalet. Rien n'est plus froid : c'est un ouvrage de marqueterie.' (*Journal*, ii. 246.)

much out of place in a Royal Academy exhibition about the year 1880. Consider that marvellously painted *Atelier* in the Louvre—a vast composition unfortunately marred by the shocking incoherence of the design. In the middle is the beautiful nude and the heap of ravishing drapery, the delicious, half-finished landscape on the easel, and Courbet himself in striped trousers; but to pull the pattern to a centre something was needed still (incidentally, the something produced did not have the desired effect), and so Courbet invented a white cat. Courbet could not invent. Doubtless he studied white cats; but his heart was not in this one. Assuredly, of the original conception she was no part. Wherefore he drew her as might have drawn her the illustrators of Christmas Numbers; not omitting that classic gesture which, brightly rendered by the three-colour process, never fails to win from the head of the family a smile and from the youngest a crow of delight —the playful paw uplifted. Where were Rembrandt and Velasquez then? Away in a café perhaps, sitting with the Courbet who could feel passionately for the foaming pots of beer and the lusty trollops that served them, leaving the conceited artisan, who also was Courbet, to make a drawing which expressed nothing but 'represented' him faithfully enough.

Such, however, were not the questions about

which critics, poets, novelists, politicians, philosophers, and rich ladies came to blows in the rattling days of the 'rasta' empire. These, like the rest of the great public, though they rarely leave painters alone, rarely take an interest in painting : for the excellent reason that they rarely know what painting is. What they like to wrangle about is 'subject.' Courbet, we know from his letters, painted *Les Casseurs de Pierres* in 1850 without the glimmer of a political intention.[1] The scene inspired him. It was one with which he, brawny and indefatigable rejoicer in his own splendid strength, could sympathize thoroughly. He could transmit through his own nerves and muscles its intense yet subtle rhythm. He felt what he saw with passion and turned his feelings into paint. Along comes *le camarade* Proudhon ; assures him he has painted the first great socialist picture, emits a flood of unfathomable nonsense, and hails the young peasant saviour of society. Courbet makes no objection. And so the fun begins. 'Le Réalisme est une aspiration démocratique,' bleats Champfleury. 'Ne voyez-vous pas s'ouvrir de nouveaux horizons ?' booms Thoré. While Napoleon III. slaps a *Baigneuse* with his switch ; and the Empress, who has gone to the *salon* to see a picture of horses by

[1] Courbet painted one or two definitely tendencious pictures, *e.g. Le Char de l'État*, a work of his nonage.

her favourite Rosa Bonheur, inquires before the Courbet 'Est-ce aussi une percheronne?' Critics less sportive or witty merely denounced Courbet's art as 'vulgar'; he delights, they complained, in the lowest types of humanity, in the least elevating scenes. To which the master, with characteristic silliness, replied that if he never painted angels it was because he had never seen any.[1] Nevertheless, whatever fatuities Courbet, under the tuition of the philosophers, might pay out to astonish the public, he was too much of a painter to be irremediably foolish about painting. And in the manifesto—silly enough, God knows—prefixed to the catalogue of his exhibition in 1855, he firmly puts the prophets in their place, justly observing that 'le titre de Réaliste m'a été imposé comme on a imposé aux hommes de 1830 le titre de Romantiques.' In this moment of lucidity it will perhaps be well to leave him. And, anyhow, he need not have bothered much about the absurd things said of him by the public or the hardly less absurd he said about

[1] Courbet, however, was not without a rustic wit, of which on suitable occasions he could make good use. For instance, M. Diaz having taken it upon himself to say that, whereas for his pictures people would always find a place in *salons* and *boudoirs*, those of Courbet would have to wait in the hall or the kitchen, Courbet replied, 'Possible, je ne les fais pas pour les mauvais lieux.' The joke is not a very good one; but it is good enough for Diaz or his pictures.

himself. What Proudhon and Castagnary and the Empress Eugénie and Courbet himself said is unlikely to be remembered long. But the teacher of Manet and animator of the Impressionists and Cézanne will not easily be forgotten; and the creator of those masterpieces in the Petit Palais will be admired always as one of the masters of modern painting.

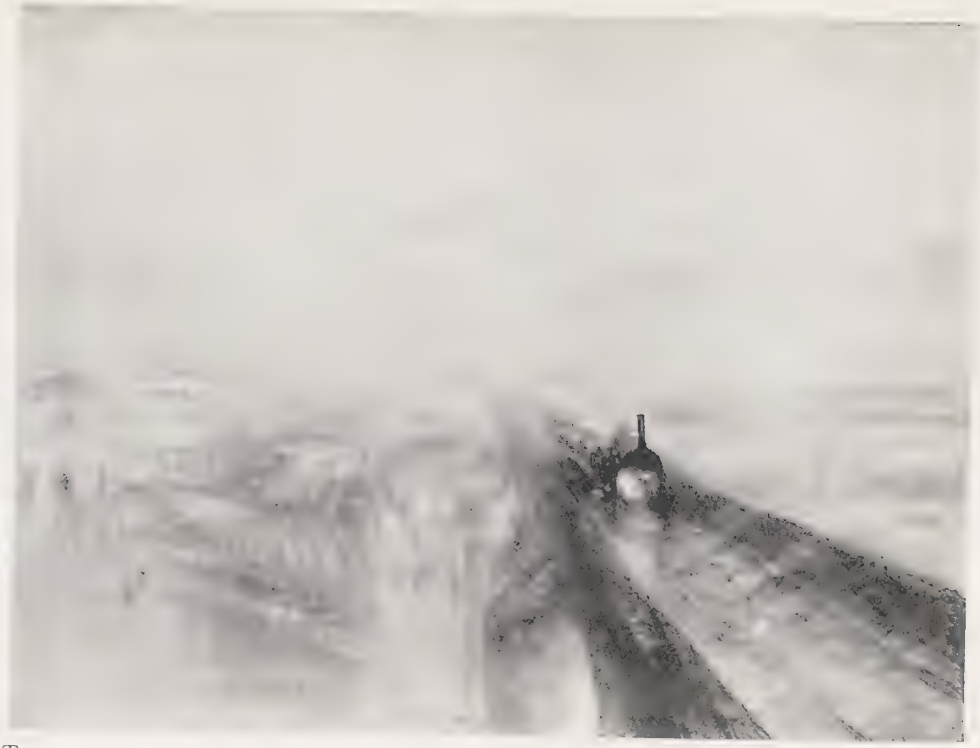
TURNER

TURNER died in 1851, but his right place in the history of nineteenth-century painting is, it seems to me, on the threshold of Impressionism. In 1885 a letter was addressed to Sir Coutts Lindsay at the Grosvenor Gallery which opened thus: 'Un groupe de peintres français, unis des mêmes tendances esthétiques, luttant depuis dix ans contre les conventions et les routines pour ramener l'art à l'observation scrupuleusement exacte de la nature, s'appliquant avec passion à rendre la réalité des formes en mouvement, ainsi que les phénomènes si fugitifs de la lumière, ne peut oublier qu'il a été précedé dans cette voie par un grand maître de l'école anglaise, l'illustre Turner.' [1]

The letter is signed by Boudin, Degas, Monet, Brown, Pissarro, Renoir, Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, Sisley. Thus was Turner recognized by the Impressionists as one, perhaps the chief, of their masters; and this, in my opinion, is his convincing title to fame.

The Turner who influenced the Impressionists was, of course, the Turner of the last period —from about 1835: the Turner of *Rain, Steam and speed*, *The Sun of Venice*, *The Slave Ship*, *Petworth Interior*; and one has only to stand a

[1] This letter was most obligingly communicated to me by the owners, Messrs. Knoedler, of Bond Street.



Turner.

Steam Speed and Rain

moment before this last, which hangs in the National Gallery, to realize how exciting, in the year 1871, it must have appeared to two young painters who were then in London—Pissarro and Monet, the theorists of the movement. For in that picture 'external reality' is treated with an out-and-out æstheticism which can still surprise; chairs have shed all significance as chairs, as things on which one sits, tables all significance as things on which other things are set; objects are interesting solely as coloured forms. For Turner the Ball Room at Petworth had ceased to be a room full of furniture possessing a value for life, and had become a congeries of luminous masses possessing æsthetic value of their own; life, in the common sense of the word, had been eliminated. The subject is seen purely in terms of art. That, no doubt, is how every thorough artist must, at some moment or other in the process of creation, see his subject; but I know not what artist before Turner had borne witness to the fact so unmistakably. So here probably for the first time the young Impressionists saw the deliberate putting into practice of unmitigated æstheticism.[1] They saw the labels torn clean off the common objects

[1] 'Monet a raconté comment, durant un voyage à Londres avec Pissarro, il eut devant Turner la sensation d'une éblouissante confirmation de ce qu'il cherchait.' (Manclair, *Claude Monet*, p. 28.)

of use, and the objects treated unequivocally as coloured forms, acting directly on the æsthetic sense, and making no appeal whatever to the cognitive and recollecting part. Of this Petworth Interior the subject, and the whole subject, is light. When he painted it, Turner, who, years earlier, considering a black cow standing between him and the sun had pained his friends by remarking, 'She is not black, but purple,' was an Impressionist—not one of the greatest, but the first.

It was not, however, as an Impressionist that Turner got a European reputation. That had come thirty years before when already he was reckoned a leader of the British school, and when that school was in great and just repute. One may think it does not say much for modern painting, but one cannot deny that, since the middle of the eighteenth century—the great Italian impulse and the little Dutch having by then petered out—British painting has stood second—at what distance I prefer not to inquire—to French. In Canaletto eighteenth-century Venice produced one painter superior to any that we have produced; but the late Venetian school was too small and too short-lived to take rank before one which, for a hundred years, was never without two or three respectable and respected painters of the third, of even the second, order. Hogarth, Wilson,

Morland, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Blake, Crome, Constable, Cotman, Lawrence, Girtin, Rowlandson, Turner; against that list Spain can set the important name of Goya, and of Lucas if any one cares to think it important. No, since 1740, if any school beside the French is worth naming at all, that school is the British.

Also, the years about 1800, when eight of the thirteen men I have named were at work, were the most active and agitated in its history. Not only was the production of work of some value considerable; but, whether cause or effect, the interest taken in art was exceptionally intelligent and keen. Turner, working at Dr. Monro's on engravings after the masters—after Claude especially—beside Girtin, was in the way of hearing discussions on style and composition very different, I imagine, from anything a student catches nowadays at the Academy or the Slade. Nevertheless, owing no doubt to the revolution and the war, there pervaded English painting at this time an unlucky provincialism. Dr. Monro's ideas were not in the European tradition as Sir Joshua's had been. Also the craze for illustrated books and picturesque tours was a malign influence obscurely but surely imposing limitations on the early nineteenth-century movement. There is something domestic and topographical about the English art of the

period, a tendency to illustration from which not even Constable always escaped. We could have done with a little of David's magisterial pomposity, high-flying idealism, and immense notion of the seriousness of art. The energetic Fuseli was too small to engender anything bigger than Tom Thumb Haydon. And it is no wonder that Turner, who spent a good thirty years of his life roaming over England, and later the Continent, taking likenesses of sites, should have become something topographical too, should rarely have freed his work quite from the parlour prettiness and pettiness of the vignette.

His first period is his best, in my opinion. The Dutchmen—Vandevelde especially—are the conspicuous influence ; but the influence of Claude, though subtler, is profound. Indeed, it is a fact, though an odd one, that Turner was more genuinely influenced by that master in these early days, up to 1805 say, than during the next, the middle period, when he was being deliberately Claudesque. It was thanks to Claude that the young Englishman could impose on his Dutch-derived sea-pieces—e.g. *The Provisioning of the Fleet* in the National Gallery —a grandeur and integrity of style which Holland rarely knew. That is where Claude serves him well. Later, the boundless admiration of his best patron, Sir George Beaumont, for the French master seems to have raised in Turner's

rather common nature a spirit of jealousy which, to be frank, was never far below the surface. He set himself to do better, and did deplorably.

For nothing was Turner less apt than to paint Claudes; and his failure affords an instructive example of the importance to artists of setting themselves appropriate problems. Claude's essentially classical mind found in the Italian landscape with its Roman ruins just what it required to raise gradually to the boiling point his creative impulse. Claude was not one to dig deeply into the motive; like all artists he needed a provocation, but once started he drew chiefly, like most great designers, on his own store. Not so Turner; not for nothing was he the compatriot and contemporary of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Nature moved him intensely, sunset and sunrise, sea and sky, and in these he found not only the motive but the very stuff of his expression. So, to paint Dido building Troy, first he borrows from Claude a composition, next elaborates it in an imagination not of the choicest, finally with his proper observations decorates. The result, as you might expect, is a thing imperfectly organized and unmistakably second-hand. Nor are these faults absent from the work of other periods. Always Turner was a passionate and poetical observer, but an organizer never. In what he saw he delighted magnificently: he had the proud, lustful eye of

a true painter; but the creative grip of a great artist he had not.

To be surprised, as one is inclined to be, at the popularity of his pictures is to be a little unfair to the cultivated public. That public does not dislike beauty. It likes beauty when beauty is accessible: and Turner is one of the most accessible of painters. Naturally, to such a lump as Mark Twain, unleavened with the least pinch of sensibility, his pictures appeared as ridiculous as those of Matisse appear to a modern bounder. But to natures of moderate refinement these pictures—all but a few of the last at any rate—made an effective and genuine appeal. Turner was not, assuredly, what Ruskin pretended he was, the humble servant of truth. Had he been, Mark Twain would probably have admired, and Ruskin detested, his productions. But Ruskin, like other critics, was making a fool's cap fit intelligent reactions; for, as Dr. MacColl[1] has observed, Turner was quite arbitrary in his dealings with nature. Nevertheless, it was from nature he took all the beauty he transferred to his canvas; and a man who was such an incorrigible thief that he pilfered from de Loutherbourg even may well be excused for borrowing a little recklessly from the goddess. Though his designs are anything but naturalistic, being borrowed

[1] MacColl, *Nineteenth-Century Art* (1902). I cannot conceive why this admirable book has never been reprinted.

rather from the stage, his effects of light and wind on land and water are perfectly observed. Though the forms and relations of forms will not correspond with the spectator's preconceived ideas, the general effect of his pictures will correspond with some recollected experience—and not with an experience only, but with some of the most intense and lyrical experiences that the cultivated spectator can recall. For the normally sensitive man or woman Turner collects, intensifies, and fixes for ever pleasant and creditable states of mind which he or she is enchanted to recapture. Turner is the most accessible of reputable painters. He is the Tennyson of the visual arts.

Turner's genius—for genius he undoubtedly had—took towards the end the bit between its teeth. He indulged his grand passion for combining coloured masses without much caring whether warrant in external reality was to be found for all that appeared on his canvas or paper. And had this last period come first, likely enough he would have been greeted with a bucketful of that familiar foul-mouthed hostility which culture keeps ever in pickle for disquieting originality. But long before 1835 Turner had become a national institution, and the educated public was only too willing to accept and admire whatever he offered. To those who would make a demi-god of him this last period is necessarily

the great one. It is the 'original' period; and for demi-gods originality is the *sine qua non*. To me the first seems preferable—that is, if I am thinking of Turner's art. If I am thinking of art in general, the last seems infinitely the most important, by reason of its effect. For it was the work of this last period which convinced, or helped to convince, the Impressionists that the labels on things are unessential, that for the artist all that matters is their significance as forms and colours.

(*Photo: Librairie de France*)

Ingres. Thétis et Jupiter

THE DEATH OF INGRES

'THE epoch ends, the world is still.' In 1867 Ingres had outlived by four years the one rival he seems ever to have taken seriously. Not that Monsieur Ingres would have dreamed of comparing a romantic upstart's pictures, or those of any other living painter for that matter, with his own; it was the manifest, and manifestly increasing, influence of this subversive young man that disquieted, that, as his biographers are fond of recording, 'fit bondir M. Ingres.' For to Ingres, born in 1780, Delacroix, born in 1798, must have seemed always representative of that younger generation which knocks so rudely and so unnecessarily at the door. Ingres was of the Empire, Delacroix of the Restoration; the gulf is as wide as that between the age of Whistler and 'artistry' and the age of Cézanne and 'sincerity'—I put both words between inverted commas because both have become purely symbolic. But Delacroix was dead. And so, about the year 1867—the year in which Ingres died—fell one of those classic periods of superficial calm below which grumble and gather calamities and innovations. Courbet had ceased to vex almost; he was hard on fifty, and was settling down to a style which, though always deplorable, was becoming familiar. Dusk was falling—so the best people hoped—on the ninth day of

wonder at his one apparently effective pupil: for Manet, who in '65 was 'plus connu que Garibaldi,' two years later, Zola notwithstanding, was ceasing to be a portent—so they hoped at least.[1] Of the Impressionists no one had heard; no one at any rate of whom M. Ingres had heard. No one did hear much of them till 1874: for years they were known as 'the school of 1874.' Monsieur Ingres could depart in peace. If by ill luck some distressing object, a Monet say, a Renoir, or a Rubens, offended his eyes, M. Ingres could do what that delightful biographer of his, Amaury-Duval, informs us he was in the habit of doing: M. Ingres could 'détourner la tête.'

Jean - Auguste - Dominique Ingres who, throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, stood—in the imaginations of the young and ardent at all events—for 'the school' was not cast for the part by Nature. It was Circumstance acting on a peppery temper that made him grand Inquisitor of an outworn religion. Before his first visit to Italy, in 1806, he was reckoned a revolutionary and consorted

[1] This, so far as I can make out, is substantially true. However, it is also true that in 1867 Manet held his first 'one-man show.' Also he was forming a school (unknown to the general public and certainly unknown to Ingres), as the early Monets and Bazilles in the Luxembourg—painted before 1871—prove conclusively.

with that famous band of Penseurs, Primitifs or Pre-Phidians, as they indiscriminately called themselves, notorious in the unfavourable climate of Paris for sporting what they were pleased to consider Homeric attire, as well as for their iconoclastic opinions. Some of these, however, were not so foolish; for instance, they held that Phidias was a master of the decadence and that the great period of Greek sculpture ended with the sixth century. Winckelmann and David, said les Primitifs, did well in crying 'Back to the ancients' but ill in not going all the way. And if they considered stupid and worthless the Roman sculpture by which David set such store, who to-day will gainsay them? The sect came to a bad end in 1805, when, after attempting, under the leadership of the dancer Mouron, to set fire to a tree in the manner of Ossian's heroes, they were taken into custody by the police. Condemned to cut their hair and change their clothes, they never recovered the metamorphosis. Soap and water were fatal to their prestige. But if, as Delécluze pretends (*David, son école et son temps*, p. 82), their chief and founder, Maurice Quaï, did really invent the word 'rococo,' they have not failed to leave a mark on history.

Meanwhile Ingres was off to Italy, where he fell in love at first sight with Giotto, Fra Angelico, and Masaccio, and copied Benozzo

Gozzoli. His earliest Italian passion, you observe, was for the Primitives. And for works of art, for painting and music at any rate, his passion was violent.[1] For human beings there was not much to spare, it seems. With his first lady-love he broke on the eve of his first Italian expedition. Indeed, it was at the farewell visit itself that 'la jeune personne'—so he told Amaury-Duval—'contraria mes idées en peinture et me tint tête.' That was enough for M. Ingres. The young lady who was to become the first Madame Ingres he had never seen before she was sent out to him in Rome—for all the world as though he had been a missionary in China. Ingres could feel passion for a woman only when he contemplated her as form. Of his sensuality much has been said by the critics, and not too much. His nude female figures betray it incessantly. But this is not passion; it is not *goût* even. It is the crude sensuality, the hearty appetite, of a great, eupeptic bourgeois. Remark how his desire goes out to the heavy, hareem type. His is sensuality untouched with sentiment, untinged with that intellectuality even which may give a twist of perversity to lust but which alone can convert

[1] Amaury-Duval, who tells us that he looked like a solid bourgeois, adds that a work of art could illuminate his countenance amazingly—could illuminate it with joy or rage.

mere lust into something sharp and exquisite. Ingres was no Cosimo Tura.[1]

After the Primitives came Raphael; but Ingres did not at once forget his earlier loves. And from the Primitives he borrowed a certain stiffness of execution which he is said to have applied especially when treating mediæval subjects (e.g. *L'Entrée de Charles VII.*, *François de Rimini*). Here is 'local colour' with a vengeance; and perhaps this peculiarity more than anything else was what made the Romantics at one moment claim him for their own. Certainly in early days he was regarded as an enemy of the school and by the school was duly anathematized; few of the classical insults hurled at the greatest of his successors, at Delacroix, Courbet, Manet, Cézanne, Matisse, were denied him. He was subversive, anarchical, a botcher, a vulgarian, a fool; and of course, he could not draw. The *Portrait of Mlle. Rivière* in the Louvre (which I am glad to say he always reckoned one of his masterpieces) was a *chinoiserie*; the Pourtalès *Odalisque*, a bad imitation of an Indian miniature. Or were not his masters those old duffers who limned the figures in the missals? Any-

[1] Ingres painted *Le Bain turc* when he was eighty-two. The critics said—after his death of course, for no one would have dared to say it when he was alive—that this picture 'résumait toutes les beautés chères à M. Ingres.'

how, a child could do better.[1] Official respectability, you perceive, only adored its god when it had failed to smother him. And perhaps outraged respectability has more method and consistency in its imbecility than we allow. After all, originality is the original sin, conviction is always the enemy. 'L'École,' said Ingres, 'est un endroit de perdition'; the remark smacks rather of rebellious Impressionism, does it not? Or, again, that exclamation of his before the early work of a favourite pupil: 'Ah, mon cher, conservez toujours cette bienheureuse naïveté.' One could almost fancy oneself transported to early Post-Impressionist days.

Ingres worshipped Raphael this side idolatry, something beyond maybe. To hear M. Thiers discoursing on 'the Urbinate' not only 'le faisait bondir' but gave him a sleepless night. For Mozart he could think of no higher praise than to call him 'the second Raphael.' But he was not going to call himself an imitator, nor was he.[2]

[1] '. . . cette fantaisie extraordinaire de remettre à la mode la manière de peindre des siècles passés. (Boutard.)

' . . . de faire rétrograder l'art de quatre siècles, à nous reporter à son enfance. . . .' (Pausanias français.)

'. . . ce jeune artiste . . . qui voudrait nous ramener à l'enfance de l'art . . . qui a foulé en vain cette terre, l'Italie, qui faisait jadis les héros et qui fera encore les artistes.' (M. de Kératry.)

[2] Thiers, as is well known, had a mania for copies, of which he formed a horrible collection, which the *communards*

Only, in the early nineteenth century, pictures were not allowed to be like themselves; they had to be like something else, and Ingres said his were like, not Raphael's, but nature. Ingres would be a Realist. You may stare: listen to Amaury-Duval describing his first visit to the master's studio in 1825: 'Élevé par une mère qui avait fait de la peinture sous la direction de Girodet, l'école de David, je l'ai dit, était pour moi le dernier mot du grand art . . . et voilà que tout à coup je me trouvais en présence ds peintures réalistes.' Yes, Ingres claimed to copy exactly what he saw. And by comparison with the pictures of David's tame manikins his were realistic almost. To classical sculpture he looked very little for inspiration, and he did look to nature—to such parts of nature, be it understood, as he was pleased to consider beautiful. From what he did not consider beautiful M. Ingres 'détourna la tête'; invoking sometimes the good offices of Madame, who, in Italy, passing those insistent mutilated beggars ('Guardi signora! Guardi!') made it her business to fling a rug over the master's head. With advantage, perhaps, Ingres might have pondered that

in a moment of lucidity destroyed. When Ingres went to Rome as director of the school, Thiers proposed that he should abandon original work and make copies of the Raphaels. This impertinent suggestion might have led to interesting results.

saying of Constable's: 'Never have I seen in Nature anything ugly.'

For some years Ingres chose to consider himself a Realist; and when critics pointed out how much he idealized—in other words distorted—(and if you would realize just how much he did distort, look at the neck of Thetis in that memorable picture at Aix-en-Provence, painted in 1811) he was furious. To him 'idealization' meant reducing truth to a truism and eliminating character, and a power of characterization was one of the things on which M. Ingres prided himself. Not without reason altogether; for of the many respects in which he differs from David a more intimate sense of the model is not the least. David, when he was not painting a portrait, did tend to reduce what he saw to a scheme of Græco-Roman clichés; whereas Ingres, like Raphael, could on occasion respond directly to the motif. Abstract though he appears, and is, compared with his great successors, he is by no means insensible to external reality.[1] But the grand, the thrilling quality, which Ingres shares with Raphael is the power

[1] But, of course, Ingres seems almost direct only by comparison with David. He was intensely abstract. Here is a note by him: 'Peindre sans le modèle. Il faut bien se pénétrer que votre modèle n'est jamais la chose que vous voulez peindre, ni comme caractère de dessin, ni comme couleur, mais qu'il est en même temps indispensable de ne rien faire sans lui . . .'

of rendering the content of form by sheer sensibility of contour. David doubtless approved; contours being amongst the rare things of which David could approve heartily. Only, unfortunately, the admirable man lacked the genius to practise what he would willingly have preached. That genius, that breathless sensibility, Raphael possessed in the highest degree. And Ingres was his descendant. These two by the incredible intensity of their sensibility have made line perform the last miracle of expression; and I hardly know what other, though I have not forgotten Holbein, is worthy to be of their company.

Ingres was, of course, no more a Realist than a Romantic. Neither was he of the stuff of which disciples are made. He was a great original artist, and could not therefore take his place neatly in any school, least of all in that peculiarly narrow and conventional one over which the citizen David presided. As, about the year 1820, it seemed to follow that any one who was not sheepishly of the school must be a Romantic, as a Romantic Ingres was hailed. In the *salon* of 1824—the famous *salon des Anglais*—he exhibited a picture which he had painted in Florence where he had been sulking under a sense of official neglect, *Le Vœu de Louis XIII.* To us it is a masterpiece patently of the school, by the chief of the school. If

not precisely by a pupil of David, it is manifestly by David's successor. To us this is obvious because, what to contemporaries seemed essential in the classical-romantic squabble being now where Gautier's red waistcoat is, we look at the painting of the picture, and the painting is severely classical. The young romantics looked elsewhere; they looked at the subject and saw that it might have come straight out of an historical novel by Sir Walter Scott. Ingres, cried the ravished red-waistcoats, is one of us, we always knew he was. Imagine their fury when, three years later, he produced *L'Apothéose d'Homère*, first excluding from Parnassus the divine Shakespeare entirely, then treating him *de haut en bas*, cutting him down the middle to be exact. It was a wretched picture, too, which may account for the fact that from thenceforth by the old gang, by respectable officialdom, and by the general public, Ingres was recognized leader of the school.

Here begins the apotheosis. For forty years M. Ingres is the officially and generally recognized glory of French art: his prestige is boundless. At the great exhibition of 1859 he refused to admit the work of any other painter into a room with his own. And sure enough the Government gave him a room to himself. Anatole France—he recalls the event in those pretty recollections of his nonage—had just

taken his stall in a crowded theatre when he observed advancing down the gangway an old gentleman who forestalled any gesture of voluntary civility with the single and simple remark, 'C'est Monsieur Ingres.' M. Ingres had, of course, a right to any seat in the house that took his fancy, and Anatole France being young and well placed had the privilege of surrendering his. Almost as incredible as his prestige were his manners. Not Johnson himself was more grossly overbearing. Maxime du Camp's tale of the luckless hostess who tried to reconcile the old tyrant with Delacroix is too well known to be retold at length. Suffice it to relate that, after an uneasy meal, the ladies having left, M. Ingres bore down on the peaceable Romantic, who was gossiping with his friends before the fire, spluttering indignantly, 'La ligne, Monsieur; la ligne c'est la probité; c'est l'honneur même'; and, having emptied his coffee-cup over his own white waistcoat, stumped out of the house. Sometimes, however, his rages were more excusable. At Rome Ingres—who, facetious anecdotes to the contrary notwithstanding, appears to have been a capable musician—had often in quartettes played second fiddle to Paganini. But since Roman days Paganini had picked up those deplorable tricks of virtuosity which are said to have made his renderings of the masters a disgrace to music; and of these,

when he came to play in Paris, M. Ingres, it seems, had not heard. On the contrary, with nothing but the pleasantest expectations, he trotted off to the concert, where he endured in silence the intolerably brilliant perversions of his two prime favourites, Mozart and Beethoven. But when all was over M. Ingres was not content merely to 'détourner la tête.' Keeping his hands clenched firmly behind his back, he greeted the astonished instrumentalist advancing to embrace his old acquaintance with this perhaps unnecessarily emphatic denial, 'Monsieur, je ne vous connais pas.'

Though Ingres was for more than forty years undisputed chief of the school, he was not by conviction a Neo-Classicist. Raphael was the God of his idolatry; to the Greeks and the Romans he piously burnt incense. To him the school stood not so much for Neo-Classicism as for constituted authority. If he loved the Institut it was because he detested anarchy. But, indeed, the Institut he did not love; he loved Raphael and Mozart, and them he loved furiously. Yet his hate was more furious still. His fantastic admiration for Flandrin is really the expression of a frenzied rage against Delacroix. All that lay outside his very limited range of sympathy he considered personally offensive. All that was not for him was against him; and all that was against him was not only

ugly but vile. Wherever he saw what displeased him he saw malice prepense; and to the end of his days it was a standing grievance that, in order to reach the Raphaels in the Louvre, he had to pass by Rubens. He was the ideal party man.

Painting apart, he was neither clever nor well educated. Of those classical authors he was so fond of using bludgeonwise to belabour all who painted or wrote or thought or felt in any way differently from himself, M. Ingres knew nothing. He had neither Latin nor Greek; and the inscriptions with which he made such impressive play he copied unintelligently stroke by stroke. He was a bourgeois of genius. The genius remains for the delight and admiration of all who care or ever shall care seriously for painting; while the bourgeois stood reassuringly under the July Monarchy and Second empire for the French school. That solid middle-class, which was creating a new world and taming the latent forces of the earth, with its half-baked culture and holiday interest in things of the mind—always provided those things were neither disquieting nor subversive—found in M. Ingres, at once great painter and friend of order, a worthy representative of an indispensable department of state—the fine arts. And M. Ingres, in return, made impressive and significant portraits of those formidable men

who were willing to overlook the fact that he was an artist in consideration of the fact that he was a pillar of society.

So in 1867, when he died full of years and honour, Ingres had not outlived his age. Society it seemed would go on growing richer along familiar lines while Bonapartes of dubious authenticity sat firmly on the throne.[1] And if

[1] The epithet 'dubious' has provoked some friendly remonstrances. What eyes historians with bees in their bonnets, with well-founded convictions I mean, have for anything that goes against their theories! The lightest word in the most frivolous article does not escape them. I was quite aware, when I wrote, that our best living historian, Mr. Simpson, was against me. Also, my admiration for that masterly writer is as complete as my respect for Madame de Rémusat. Yet I cannot say that the arguments of the one or the loyalty of the other suffices to persuade me that Louis Napoleon was a legitimate child. The main arguments against his being the son of the King of Holland are fairly set out by Mr. Simpson, *e.g.* the fact that the king refused to be present at his birth or baptism, and the unauthenticated legend that in 1831 he explicitly disowned him. To this I may add that in 1800 Louis Bonaparte (subsequently King of Holland) had contracted in Italy syphilis, for which in 1806 Corvisart was subjecting him to the most humiliating and improbable treatment (see *Rémusat*, ii. 304-305 and note). In 1807 he was sent to take the waters at Aix-la-Chapelle. On April 20, 1808, the future Napoleon III. was born. As for Madame de Rémusat's touching belief in the chastity of la reine Hortense (Napoleon the Third's mother), the unlucky existence of Le Duc de Morny—admittedly her illegitimate son—renders it, I fear, quite valueless as evidence for the legitimacy of Louis Napoleon.

clever, disaffected meddlers presumed to opine that the industrial proletariat was restive and M. Bismarck ambitious, Ingres was not the man to heed such idle gossip. In painting, the followers of Delacroix and odious M. Courbet notwithstanding, the signs of dissolution were not conspicuous. Innumerable conventions were still universally accepted; there were vast tracts of common ground. Every one still believed, or believed he believed, in normal vision: in argument almost every one would have acknowledged the importance of literary interest and associated ideas: every one wished to show his pictures in the *salon*. That explosion of conscious individualism, that appeal to science and to a private sense of beauty, that claim for every artist to see and feel for himself, which was to culminate in pure æstheticism, though in the air, were not triumphant yet. M. Ingres departed in comparative peace from a superficially tidy world unvexed by nightmares of war or Impressionism.

'The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill—
The famous orators have done,
The famous poets dead and gone,
The famous men of war have fought,
The famous speculators thought,
The famous players, sculptors, wrought,
The famous painters fill'd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all.'

The next fifty years M. Ingres would not have enjoyed. However much he might have bounded or averted his gaze, life would have gone on and life would have infuriated him. Yet were the old tyrant alive to-day, when exhibitions 'From Ingres to Picasso' are the commonest things in Paris and not unknown in London, he might, were he not too cross or stupid to notice it, find matter for consolation. For forty years after his death the best painters, even Cézanne (though perhaps not Seurat), tended to keep far closer to the fact than he would have considered decent. They constructed their pictures out of what struck their eyes. In the strict sense of the term they were sensationalists. Now, though by comparison with David, Ingres kept close to the fact and respected nature, by comparison with the Impressionists he is as abstract as Poussin. What he saw was for him a starting-point where he seldom lingered to quarry what was to be most precious in his content. He elaborated, he embellished, he ennobled ; and this he did, not by sensation reacting to observation, but according to plan by intellectual processes. Compared with Renoir he is a master of abstraction. Wherefore in such a collection as M. Paul Rosenberg recently brought to London from Paris, Ingres and Picasso manifestly join hands across half a century of Impressionism.

Both, no doubt, start from an emotion or sensation, but both, leaving behind the original stimulus, hurry forward to a more or less abstract conception. And, to obtain their effect, both depend on the flawlessness of that conception and their genius for rendering it in line. The Frenchman, with his strong sensuality, may be less abstract than the Spaniard with his dash of sentimentality. Nevertheless it is Ingres that Picasso succeeds in the line of abstract painters. Whether the rising generation will attempt to exploit Picasso's discoveries, or will prefer to cultivate that rich territory bequeathed by Delacroix, Corot, and the Impressionists, remains to be seen; but should the impulse towards abstraction predominate it is to be hoped that the ghost of Ingres will not be too grumpy to smile.

THE MYSTERY OF MANET

THE hubbub provoked by Manet's pictures, the public abuse, the private insults, the notoriety which induced Degas sarcastically to observe 'Il est plus connu que Garibaldi,' have often led people to suppose that Manet invented Impressionism. Such volumes of vituperation, they fancy, could never have been aimed at a single head; surely they were thrown to bespatter a movement; and the movement to be bespattered was Impressionism, of course. As a matter of fact, Manet began to experiment in Pleinairisme only about the year 1870, and the first of his pictures generally to be reckoned 'impressionist,' and as such reviled, was the *Argenteuil*, exposed in 1875; whereas the pictures that aroused the grand *brouhaha* were *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, first exhibited in 1863, and *L'Olympia*, which was painted in the same year and shown in '65. Both were painted in the studio in an arranged light, and neither is painted with the systematic palette and little touches which are the essential characteristics of impressionist painting.

What, then, was Manet's unpardonable offence, or what were his offences, in the eyes of academic painters and the general public? To suppose, as M. Jacques Blanche appears to suppose, that his sole offence lay in the fact that

(*Photo : Archives du Louvre*)

Manet.

Le déjeuner sur l'herbe

he was a good, contemporary artist is, I think, to overwork a good hypothesis. True enough it is that, so long as young, a good artist is almost always disapproved of by the flock and its bell-wethers. Were Raphael living now—as, being a genuine artist, he probably would not be content to copy the work of some one who painted four hundred years ago—it is equally probable that his pictures, on their first appearance, would be greeted with general execration. The established painters, the leading critics, the public and the old gentlemen who write to the papers would undoubtedly treat him as they treated Cézanne and Matisse ; the Slade students would be forbidden to admire his work ; and only with infinite difficulty would the Tate Gallery be compelled to accept one of his pictures as a gift. Nevertheless, it is probable that, as in the case of Cézanne, the general public would, after a few years, grow bored with the subject, while a few years later the professional painters—not, of course, the schoolmasters and directors of galleries—would come to recognize some part of his merit: whereas Manet was held in general execration for twenty years at least, and seventeen years after his death it required a superhuman effort to get *L'Olympia* accepted by the Luxembourg.

However, it is with that early storm of almost incredible violence which raged against Manet

during the 'sixties—when little or nothing had been heard of Impressionism—that I am here concerned. What had Manet done that his name should be universally anathema? The academic painters found their pretext in his technique, which they declared to be clean contrary to the great tradition of painting. A theory had somehow got itself established in the studios that a pure colour was never to be placed alongside another pure colour, but was to be led up to through a series of semi-tones; the result of which theory was canvases whose uniform blackness was broken only here and there by a patch of high-light. This is chiaroscuro in its extreme development; a monstrosity with which we are all too familiar, and which is, I believe, still idolized by academicians in many parts of the world. Manet painted in bright colours juxtaposed in broad patches, and banished what was called 'shade' from his pictures: he made his shadows out of colours, that is to say. To people who had seen only the academic pictures of the nineteenth century, Manet's may well have seemed alarmingly bright and lively. M. Paul Mantz, the Dr. MacColl of the 'sixties, himself grew purple at this opposition of clear tones and absence of dark brown shades; 'ces tableaux, dans leur bariolage rouge, bleu, jaune et noir, sont la caricature de la couleur et non la couleur elle-même,' he screamed. And, as I

say, his screams would be comprehensible had he never seen anything but pictures by his academic contemporaries and their immediate predecessors. But, surely, even in 1865, eminent art critics and painters and amateurs must often have seen, if not Italian Primitives (which were then quite out of fashion), at any rate works by the Spanish masters, Ribera for instance, and the Dutch Frans Hals. There was nothing in Manet's technique greatly to astonish any one acquainted with Spanish painting of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The ignorant public may have been slightly disconcerted: but how much does the ignorant public care for breaches of technical laws? The conservative painters and amateurs may have been disconcerted too; but surely not enough to account for their fury. Under the cry of 'revolutionary technique' they were concealing, I suspect, unconsciously perhaps in most cases, the indignant reactions of a prejudice less creditable and far more cherished.

That Manet got his technical inspiration from the Spaniards appears certain, though apparently M. Blanche would like to deny it. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that he believes Manet never was in Spain, though M. Duret has given a circumstantial account of meeting him at the Puerta del Sol in Madrid and spending some time with him in that city and

at Toledo. Between two such witnesses one does not hesitate: there is not the slightest reason for disbelieving M. Duret. Manet's work betrays the influence of Goya and Velasquez, as well as that of Ribera; what is more, Velasquez has left pictures no blacker than the lightest of Manet's, has juxtaposed tones without transitions, and for the fixed oppositions of light and shade has substituted a variable opposition of tones. Possibly Manet went farther than any of the Spaniards in flattening his colours; but this is hardly enough to account for the frantic storm of moral indignation which broke and broke again about his ears. We must seek a cause closer to the surface.

'Vulgar realism' was what the newspapers accused him of, and here we are getting nearer to a genuine motive. In 1865, you must remember, Ingres was still alive and the tradition of David still kicking, in so far as it can be said ever to have kicked.[1] Art was expected to be noble and idealistic; that is to say, the subjects, of large pictures at any rate, were expected to be mythological or historical or at least picturesque. (*N.B.* picturesque subjects should

[1] In theory, however, M. Ingres could not object to 'flatness.' He had painted 'flat' himself. 'Maintenant on veut que ça tourne, je me moque pas mal que ça tourne.'

be sought in remote or traditionally romantic countries—Bedouins hunting lions in Africa are picturesque, or camels at the gates of Damascus.) Now the subjects of Manet's two great early works are neither historical nor picturesque, they are scenes taken from contemporary Parisian life: and it may be noted that when he defended the introduction of a naked woman amongst the dressed and bewhiskered gentlemen of *Le Déjeuner*, on the ground that Giorgione also had mixed nude and clothed figures, the answer was: 'Yes, but Giorgione idealized his naked woman.' Manet's preference for subjects drawn from contemporary life was undoubtedly resented from the very first; and I fancy it was this taste for modernity, or, rather, his distaste for ideal themes, which drew from his master, Couture, that bitter criticism, 'Allez, mon garçon! vous ne serez jamais que le Daumier de votre temps.'

Manet's 'vulgar realism' displayed itself not only in his choice of subject, but, as I have already hinted, in his treatment of the nude. 'The nude' played a prodigious part in the 'ideal art' of the nineteenth century; but it was an ideal nude, a nude to do credit to the figures of nymphs and goddesses and heroines in distress, a nude based—so its perpetrators imagined—on a study of classical antiquity, the

high Renaissance, David and the pupils of Ingres. Its contours had to be augustly round and inflated, its attitudes had to be traditional, its muscles more or less Olympian ; above all, it had to be as innocent of any particular flavour or character as if it had come from Chicago in a tin. Needless to say, to produce this staple article an elaborate process had been invented which was perseveringly taught in the schools. A good part of Manet's vulgar realism consisted in the fact that he despised alike the process and the product.

But Manet was not the first : Courbet had already gone to contemporary life for his subjects, and denounced with the utmost violence academic beauty and the idealized nude. Also, like Constable and Corot, long before the Impressionists, he had painted in the open ; but as he only made studies there, and retired always to the studio to elaborate his work, he cannot properly be considered the master of that movement. Of Manet, however, he was the master ; and instead of regarding Manet as the founder of Impressionism it would be more just to think of him as the descendant of Courbet. From Courbet he inherited one or two technical characteristics and the greater part of what was called his Realism, and from Courbet he inherited an enormous load of hatred. Courbet was born in 1819, thirteen years before Manet, and had

his greatness been fully appreciated by the 'sixties, Manet's art would never have shocked as it did, which notwithstanding, there is in *Le Déjeuner* and *L'Olympia* a quality more disquieting still than anything to be found in the art of Courbet, something which outraged the feelings of people who had contrived with wry faces to swallow the Realism of the master of Ornans.

Manet's Realism is, to borrow a term from his own language, more actual. It is true that Courbet's nudes were no longer nymphs and goddesses, but they were models. To be sure, the naked lady in *Le Déjeuner* is a model, too ; but she is a model off duty. She is the sort of girl you might have met any day of the week hurrying up la rue Blanche, and she has unmistakably been taken out for a picnic by two young gentlemen whom you might have met any day in the quartier des Batignolles. *L'Olympia* is even worse ; she is just a Parisienne. You may divine her forms any day in a hundred cafés and 'dancings' beneath a thousand different frocks. There she lies on her Indian shawl, with her black servant and her black cat, a confessed 'demi-mondaine chez elle.' And, to give a final touch of shockingness to the affair, not only was this thin, angular, acid, and strongly characterized young body the exact opposite of the ideal of the Academies, it affronted equally the ideal

of the 'vieux marcheurs.' It is, as M. Jacques Blanche well says, of a 'sensualité moderne, "baudelairienne."'

And so we find the chief cause of Manet's shocking reputation just where we should expect to find it—in the subjects of his pictures: subject being the only thing in a picture which nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of ten thousand can understand at all. All this about the sinfulness of juxtaposing pure tones we may dismiss as the expression merely of the testiness of a few old and ignorant professors. Neither do I believe that his habit of flattening his forms did him so very much harm with the public, though it did make his pictures 'unlifelike'—unlike photographs, that means: the pictures of Ingres and David are unlifelike too, and so, for that matter, are those of Raphael, and so is Greek sculpture. His 'Realism' no doubt gave offence: it was permissible to paint contemporary still-life and genre, but to treat scenes of contemporary life on so large a scale—as though they were grand mythological or historical subjects—was felt to be something like an affront to national honour. And when you combine this last reproach with the one before, when you realize that he was not only taking contemporary life for his theme but was flattening it out; when you realize that he was stylizing, distorting, things

that were familiar to the general public; that he was finding motives in that public's own daily life and positively treating them artistically; you will see that he was doing something very bad indeed—that he was doing much what the Impressionists did, and deserved as much obloquy as they got.

He got more: for though the contemptuous hilarity provoked by Manet's pictures was not perhaps greater than that provoked by the pictures of Renoir or Monet, the virulence of moral censure was undoubtedly more intense. There is nothing surprising in this: though the period from 1850 to 1870 is amongst the glorious in the glorious history of French art; though it is illustrated by the names of Ingres, Delacroix, Chassériau, Corot, Daumier, Courbet, Carpeau, and Manet; by Flaubert, Baudelaire, Renan, Gautier, Mérimée, and half a dozen more great writers; yet is it the period at which French society was at its uglies—one of the few really ugly moments in the social history of France. The disease—the pervasion of middle-class standards—gnawed everywhere. England, the leader of modern industrialism, was naturally the most furiously afflicted; but France did not escape. And on the top of the middle-class mediocrity and respectability of Louis-Philippe came the vulgar, cheap-jack gaiety of the Court of Napoleon III.

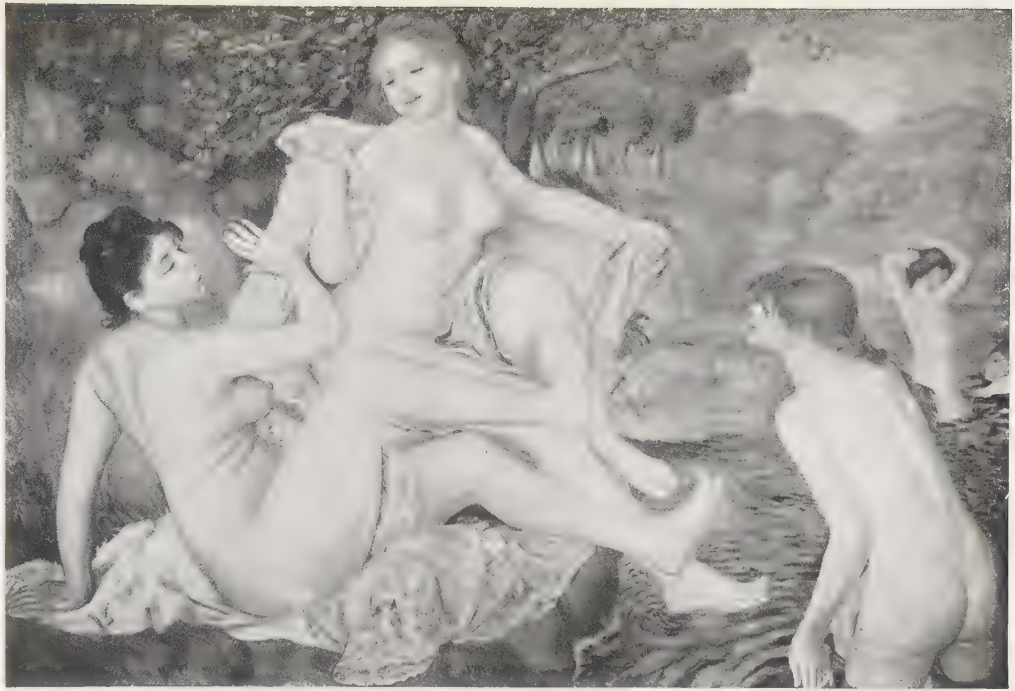
Now when on the top of a solid, stupid, conventional mass you get a more free-mannered élite, which fears its inferiors and dare not affront the prejudices of the herd, atrocious hypocrisy is bound to ensue. We had a taste of that sort of thing in England at the beginning of last century, when a tradition of civilization still lingered from the eighteenth amongst the classes who stood in perpetual terror of a prudish bourgeoisie and the mass beneath it. Read Byron and reflect upon his fate. Under Napoleon III. the upper classes acted with considerable freedom while professing abject submission to the prejudices of Monsieur Joseph Prudhomme. The result was hypocrisy blacker even than that of mid-Victorian England, where the upper classes more sincerely toed the middle-class line. Into this world came Édouard Manet, quite unconcernedly referring to the notorious fact that young ladies from Montmartre think nothing of bathing naked with young gentlemen who have often seen them without their clothes on, and that *demi-mondaines*, lolling on *lits-de-repos*, receive nonchalantly bouquets from their 'kind keepers.' He called attention to it, by accident as it were, without one mitigating shudder or one palliating leer ; he took it simply as the motive for a completely disinterested, a positively chaste, work of art. Here, he seemed to say, is a scene

from contemporary life which inspires an admirable composition. No wonder the virtuous who gloried in their indignation at vicious scenes, and the vicious who revelled in their sense of naughtiness, were alike furious with the man who regarded such things merely as subjects.

THE REDISCOVERY OF PAGANISM

IT is a pleasant, and to me novel, experience to find oneself made welcome in Bond Street. To me it never happened before this summer (1923); but it is never too late to learn what it must feel like to be Mr. Berenson. The reason why I am kindly received is that, like all reputable critics, I have for years been urging the rich to buy pictures by the French Impressionists. The rich—the English rich, I mean, who in matters of art are always some thirty years behind the times—at last give signs of making a start; and the dealers to meet the anticipated demand have laid in a stock of Renoirs, Manets, Monets, Sisleys, Degas, and even Cézannes: naturally, they hope that the reputable critics, of whom I am one, will continue to urge.

As a matter of fact, now that they are off, the rich will not need much urging, I fancy; for not since the end of the eighteenth century have they had such a chance of buying what they know to be right and at the same time like genuinely. Not since Fragonard have the taste of the *beau monde* and good painting made so happy a match. Indeed, the odd thing is that the match was not made years ago; and I can explain it only by supposing that till lately the great still went in too much fear of middle-class earnestness to revel frankly in that paganism



(Photo: Druet)

Renoir. Les Baigneuses

which they recognize in impressionist painting, and which is, I believe, the quality that draws them most strongly to it. It is a genuine and delicious quality, and they appreciate it genuinely. Ordinary cultivated people rarely enjoy wholeheartedly æsthetic qualities pure ; they would never care much for Mantegna, Raphael, and Ingres were it not their duty to ; but, mixed with other more appetizing qualities, fine form and colour are by no means distasteful to them, and the Impressionists offer colour and form of the loveliest, saturated in the sweet, delicious wine of newly tapped paganism.

The cultivated rich seem at last to have discovered in the Impressionists what the Impressionists themselves rediscovered half by accident. They rediscovered paganism—real paganism, I mean—something real enough to be the inspiration and content of supreme works of art. Paganism, I take it, is the acceptance of life as something good and satisfying in itself. To enjoy life the pagan need not make himself believe that it is a means to something else—to a better life in another world, for instance, or a juster organization of society, or complete self-development : he does not regard it as a brief span or portion in which to do something for his own soul, or for his fellow-creatures, or for the future. He takes the world as it is, and enjoys to the utmost what he finds in it : also,

he is no disconsolate archæologist spending his own age thinking how much more happily he could have lived in another, and what a pagan he would have been on the banks of the Ilissus. No, paganism does not consist in a proper respect for the pagan past, but in a passionate enjoyment of the present; and Poussin, though he painted Bacchanals galore, would have been quite out of place in the world of Theocritus. Your true pagan neither regrets nor idealizes: and while Swinburne was yearning nostalgicly for 'the breasts of the nymph in the brake,' Renoir was finding inspiration for a glorious work of art in the petticoats of the shopgirls at the Moulin de la Galette.

I am talking about art and artists, mind you. There have always been plenty of people to delight in shopgirls' legs; but only an artist can get far enough away from, without losing hold of, this agreeable theme to transmute it into a thing of beauty. The common man when he tries to handle it is merely prurient or pornographic. In Renoir's pictures or Manet's there is no taint of anecdote or reminiscence, nothing of Félicien Rops or Van Dongen. They make you feel surely enough that the scene—be it dance or picnic, promenade or bar—is joyous, that 'the atmosphere' is delightful; but both are far too much artists to hint at any particular feeling of their own

for the model, considered not as a form but as a particular human being, or, worse still, to invite you to share it. All they have to express comes in to them through form and colour, and through form and colour goes out. If you want to mark for yourself the difference between the feeling of an artist for the gaiety and romance of Montmartre in the latter part of last century and that of some one who was not, you need only turn first to a picture by Renoir (e.g. *Le Moulin de la Galette*), and then to Mr. George Moore's reminiscences (e.g. *The End of Marie Pellegrin*).[1] The artist never brags and chatters; he creates: whereas all that Mr. Moore can do is to insinuate what a devil of a fellow he was, *calidus juventa, consule Felice.*

I said that the Impressionists rediscovered paganism half by accident. They came at it

[1] That this story should be reckoned by reputable critics a masterpiece is one of those things that will never cease to puzzle me. I should have supposed (of course I should have been wrong) that it was the work of some student of Ranger Gull, a smutty fourth-form boy who had been reading translations of Balzac on the sly. Think of that death-bed scene with the jewels and expensive furniture (presents from a prince), the bitch in pup on the priceless embroidered cushions, the dirty harlots gambling, cheating, and squabbling, the bottle of absinthe (of course) on a wonderful Empire table (naturally), and Marie herself dying on the balcony in her brand-new frock while the heartless world enjoys its books and cigars at the Elysée Montmartre —think, and marvel at the power of reputation.

through, of all things in the world, a doctrine —the pleinairiste doctrine. One hardly realizes how contrary to all the rules it was—I don't say it never was done—for a painter, before the Impressionists, to take his canvas out of doors and there complete his picture. Corot himself never made more than sketches *sur le motif*, and I think the same is true of Constable and Courbet. Daumier, to be sure, went into the street ; but to seek, not its beauty and movement, but its tragic significance : if any precursor of Impressionist paganism there be, assuredly he is not Daumier. Still less is he that occasionally admirable painter Monticelli, who had no sense of actuality at all ; but perhaps there is something to be said for the claims of Constantin Guys. The Impressionists at any rate, in search of *le motif*, took their easels out with them ; took them into the streets and public gardens, into the country, into railway stations, down the river ; and in the *motif* itself had to find an inspiration to fill their canvases to the brim. For another impressionist doctrine —dogma, one might almost say—which made for the rediscovery of paganism was what contemporaries of Claude Monet were pleased to call the doctrine of scientific representation. Claude Monet insisted that the artist should paint only what he saw ; he was to put nothing into his picture but what was visible in the

object. Now, at a picnic or a *café-chantant* an artist cannot really see nobility or pathos or 'the light that never was,' he can only 'think them in.' But the Impressionists were forbidden to think anything in, so they had to peer hard into picnics and *cafés-chantants* to find some purely visual quality that would suffice to fill a work of art. They found beauty; and, bettering their instructions, added a lyrical quality—their delight in beauty. They stared and stared again at contemporary life, and the more they looked at it the more they liked it.

The consequence of these pleinairiste and pseudo-scientific theories was that the Impressionists gave a vision of life at one remove—transformed by a temperament, that is to say—instead of giving it at two, as the artist must who works from studies and adds sentiments in a carefully arranged north light. Compare any picnic or garden scene by Renoir with some picture of a fête by Watteau, and you will see in a moment what I am driving at. The Impressionist painter is so much closer to reality—not in representation, of course, but in sentiment—that by comparison Watteau seems almost to be giving us the picture of a picnic on the stage. I am not suggesting that there is any superiority in the impressionist method—I do not think there is: but I am suggesting that it led directly to the rediscovery of pagan-

ism. The impressionist painters had to extract all the beauty and significance they required from their surroundings: they could depend neither on the intellectual additions and transformations nor on the traditional technical enrichments of the studio; nor were they permitted to eke out an artistic living by drawing on the dignity or picturesqueness of their theme. History and exoticism were taboo. In contemporary life they had to find all that they required, and contemporary life was lavish beyond their needs; so naturally they fell in love with it, and made the most exquisitely civilized of their generation and ours share their emotion.

When I say that the Impressionists fell in love with their surroundings I use the expression advisedly. At their best they are as lyrical as Fra Angelico himself:

> 'The world is so full of such wonderful things,
> I am sure we should all be as happy as kings.'

And you must remember that the wonderful things of which the world was so full had for years been considered inappropriate, if not inimical, to art. Turner, to be sure, had painted a Great-Western express rushing over the Thames at Maidenhead in a rain-storm; but there is no question here of accepting contemporary life, the work being—as its title confesses

—a poem in praise of rain, speed, and steam, rather than the picture of a locomotive crossing a railway bridge. Generally speaking, it is true to say that the implements and fashions of the nineteenth century had been assumed to be without artistic significance. They were uninspiring : they had no secret for the poet's ear; they were ugly—Ruskin said so. Turn to back numbers of *Punch* and you will find 'our artist' protesting in horror against the railway trains, iron bridges, factory chimneys, and steamboats to which 'the manufacturer' would draw his attention : for all I know, the sort of artist in whom Mr. Punch believes protests to this day, and for all I care. Be that as it may, in the middle of last century it was certainly held that stage-coaches, sailing-ships, classical antiquity, and mediæval costumes were beautiful, and that contemporary apparel and means of locomotion were not. Now, when the ordinary objects of everyday life are held to be insignificant and incapable of provoking emotion, you may have a great, austere classical art, or a literary and romantic, but pagan art you cannot have. It was the Impressionists who gave us that by discovering the beauty of their surroundings, snapping their fingers at Monsieur Ingres, ignoring Ruskin, and overlooking Jehovah.

The impressionist painter was in love with

his world. He was in love with the absurd little horse-cab that took him to the gare St. Lazare, with its yellow body and its driver's shiny white hat. He was in love with the streets and the passers-by and the garish shop windows and the architecture of the boulevards even. He was in love with the station when he got there, with the bookstalls and the piles of luggage and the tall carriages and the puffing locomotives. He was in love with the cuttings and embankments and bridges, and the ridiculous little villas seen from the window, with their palisades and vegetable plots.

'Mon dieu, mon dieu, la vie est là,'

burst out the most enchanting, though most penitent, of their poets. And their pagan lyricism was not for the landscape only. You can follow them into the little banal *gargote*, and delight in tumblers of red wine half-filled and broken bread and meats and fruit-parings and matchboxes on a white cloth. You can linger over the loveliness of blue cigarette-smoke, of the ladies' funny little frocks, and the sombre, would-be correctness of the bearded gentlemen. You can clap your hands in ecstasy (*à bas Ruskin*) as a steam tug passes under the bridge and a railway train potters over it. The world is so full of such wonderful things : the world is lovely : life is delicious.

This is paganism : and this joy in the beauty of what the orthodox considered ugly came to the impressionist painters, I think, largely because they took their canvases out of doors in the laudable determination to paint only what they saw, and to find in that an adequate inspiration. They refused to find in what philosophers call 'external reality' a means or a symbol ; they loved it for itself, and were rewarded with a copious gift of the very stuff of art. This unpretentious, and unpremeditated, paganism is, unless I mistake, what has endeared and still endears them to so many sensitive people who, as a rule, care little for painting. But what makes so many of their pictures masterpieces is, of course, the individual genius of each painter for creating an appropriate form, a combination of lines and colours, in which to envelop and externalize his emotion. May I add, by way of footnote, that, though we, amateurs, are at present thoroughly in the mood to delight in the paganism of the Impressionists, the best of our painters are not ; or, at any rate, are themselves anything but pagan, being pensive rather and disposed to abstract construction along tradititional lines? The severely æsthetic qualities of the great Impressionists—their colour and drawing—are what they admire, when they admire them at all. Though our 'surroundings'—clothes, vehicles,

buildings, utensils, etc.—are considerably different from those of the 'seventies and 'eighties, Henri Matisse alone of contemporary artists has, I think, done for them what the Impressionists did for theirs. He, and perhaps Bonnard (sometimes called the last Impressionist), are to-day our only pagans; they are as great as any of their contemporaries, but they are not representative of the contemporary movement.

(*Photo : Librairie de France*)

Degas — Les Blanchisseuses

THE TWO IMPRESSIONISMS

THE outcry against Impressionism is supposed to have reached its top note—on which it rested a dozen years—in 1877, the year in which the group finally accepted the name imposed contemptuously in '74. By 1883—the year in which Renoir changed his style and Seurat was first heard of—any picture that looked odd to the milkman was called 'impressionist,' just as to-day any picture that looks so to a cabinet minister is called 'futurist.' Even people enjoying subtler powers of analysis than those with which milkmen and ministers are commonly blest were then in the habit of calling 'impressionist' two totally different kinds of painting; and even to-day the distinction between what—to preserve a useful label—I shall call 'impressionist painting' and 'impressionist illustration' is by no means perfectly appreciated. Yet appreciated it must be if we are to understand the movement that dominated the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

According to Geoffroy, the Impressionists proper of the first generation were Monet,[1] Pissarro, Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Sisley, Marie Braquemond and Guillaumin.[2] All were Plein-

[1] This essay was written while Monet was still alive.

[2] The first pleinairiste picture, so far as I can discover, was Monet's *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (for Monet also painted a '*déjeuner*'); what remains of it is still, I believe, in the master's studio.

airistes. All were revolutionaries or believed that they were. All discountenanced the use of arranged light and were in violent reaction against official teaching. As early as 1863, Claude Monet, meeting in the studio of Gleyre—who taught his pupils never to paint what they saw and always to have the antique in mind—Renoir, Sisley, and Bazille (who was killed in 1871), persuaded his new friends to fly 'ce funeste enseignement.' All the Impressionists proper subscribed, more or less, to the doctrine of the scientific palette, the division of tones, and complementary colours. All professed to render the truth and nothing else. Our visual experience—has not science said it?—consists of sensations caused by light; colour merges into colour, bounding lines, like perspective, are mere intellectual makeshifts: let us be true to our sensations. Sooner or later, the question was bound to arise, 'Are you so sure that sensational truth is the end of art?' And when it arose—Cézanne, Seurat, and Gauguin had a hand in raising it—the bottom was bound to fall clean out of impressionist dogma. But we are still in '83 and the end is not yet.

Had the first batch of Impressionists been theorists merely, had they not been great painters as well, needless to say their dubious science would have served them no better than moral nostrums served the Pre-Raphaelites. But

since artists in revolt against current doctrine must needs have a creed of some sort, this quasi-scientific stuff did as well as anything else—though Renoir, I surmise, found it always a trifle abstruse. For the rest, it was their disconcerting sincerity perhaps as much as the novelty of their theories which earned them after 1871 the name of 'communards,' just as, since 1917, any young artist of conviction has stood a good chance of being called 'bolshevist.' Not until 1877 did they become sufficiently group-conscious to accept a more definite name; then they accepted the one given in '74 derisively by the Paris *Charivari*—a journal notorious then, as its British namesake is still, for consistent hostility to all that is original and fine in art or thought—which dubbed them derisively 'Impressionists.'

The best of the young writers, because they were themselves intelligent and sensitive, recognized in Pleinairisme a sympathetic manifestation, and stood up for it accordingly. But it would be asking a good deal of men of letters to expect them to appreciate fully and at first sight anything so purely pictorial as a landscape by Monet or Pissarro. Mallarmé, to be sure, of a landscape by the former, said charmingly, 'C'est aussi expressif que le sourire de la Joconde.' But I like better Pissarro's own retort to a literary critic who extolled, at

Pissarro's expense, the elevated and elevating character of Millet's peasants: 'Oui, Millet est biblique, moi, je ne suis que hébreu.' Could irony be more illuminating? But when the men of letters wished to praise Impressionism —and they praised it abundantly and to some purpose (the critics and writers played a notable part in opening the eyes of the public, or creating a new *snobisme*—whichever way you like to put it), it was to the other side of the movement, to impressionist illustration or Naturalism, that they turned instinctively. Wherefore, pretty often, they commended the Pleinairistes for virtue not their own—for characterization, psychological subtlety, irony even—qualities on which Degas or Toulouse-Lautrec might justly be congratulated, but which cannot reasonably be attributed to Renoir or Sisley.

Theory apart, it was from Corot and Courbet, Turner and Delacroix, that the Pleinairistes derived inspiration. Between '55 and '65 Pissarro was in the habit of styling himself 'élève de Corot'; and how much Renoir owed to Courbet is apparent not only in his early work. In the Petit Palais there is a *Baignade* by Courbet in which you will find, in a pose which Renoir has meditated to some purpose, that very red-haired, white-skinned woman which in work of Renoir's middle period has become a signa-

ture almost.[1] Now in the productions of the Illustrators, or Naturalists—Degas, Lautrec, Raffaëlli, Forain, and the miserable Steinlen (Cheret was a brilliant illustrator but hardly a naturalist)—I find no reference whatever to Corot or Courbet. Their masters were Japan, Manet to some extent, and that school of novelists called 'naturalist'; from Constantin Guys also they learnt something. Indeed 'naturalist' is, I think, the best name for this group, which was modern rather than impressionist; only the best of both wings, being sincere and personal, had an air of being novel and startling; and the great public had made up its mind to call whatever was new and startling 'impressionist,' or rather (as Geoffroy tells us) for reasons known only to itself 'impressionalist.'

Japanese painting was discovered somewhere about 1860: and at the London exhibition of '62 European painters began to take intelligent notice. A little later a Japanese shop, 'La Porte chinoise,' was opened in the rue de Rivoli. It became a meeting-place for a knot of alert people, artists and amateurs, of whom by far the most important was Degas. Degas was never a

[1] I would have been glad to reproduce this picture by Courbet; but an unlucky quarrel between the Ville de Paris and Courbet's heirs, now in litigation, puts a temporary stop to the taking of photographs.

rebel. Ingres—anathema to the young Plein-airistes—was from first to last his idol. Always his ambition had been to draw like Ingres. At his death were found in his studio several paintings by the master, and a collection of superb drawings (of the former one is in the National Gallery, and one of the finest drawings in the collection of Mr. Maynard Keynes). But for all his classical predilections Degas had a restless modern mind; and Japan, without shocking his veneration for line, satisfied his taste for modernity. It was from Japanese prints he acquired that surprising method of composition, that habit of looking at the *motif* from an odd angle—from right above or below for instance; and Japanese is that frankness of vision which accepts oddities as a matter of course, which allows one to make the muzzle of a bassoon or an opera hat, jutting up in front of the proscenium, the foreground of a picture. The unexpectedness of Degas' designs has been attributed to a study of instantaneous photographs; possibly some were suggested by photographs, but it was Japanese prints which gave him the idea of turning a photograph into an æsthetically effective pattern. A passion for truth, common to the best of his generation—painters, writers, and men of science—impelled him to see things as they are and not as painters were expected to see them. Instead, however,

of seeing the world as Monet saw it, as a congeries of multi-coloured masses melting into each other, Degas, not less truthfully, saw it as a pattern—an almost flat pattern sometimes; and this way of seeing he got from Japan.

In one sense the art of Degas may be fairly called 'instantaneous.' It is not that his drawings are like photographs, but that he delights in seizing movement and rendering it, not by a generalized version, but in the ungainly exactitude of an arrested gesture. Renoir likewise was fond of catching an instant (witness *La Balançoire*, *Les Parapluies*), but Renoir gives always a generalized sense of a particular situation, which for him is in fact a mere means to lovely colour and form; whereas Degas arrests a movement and petrifies it. He is interested in the character which nature rather than imaginative conception gives to things. The strangeness of his design is the strangeness of fact. Closeness to truth has little or nothing to do with the appeal of the Pleinairistes' masterpieces; their genius dwelt in those unexplored places where vision is transmuted into pictorial conception, whereas the genius of Degas was as an electric spark between his astounding eye and unfaltering finger-tips. Degas was not a pantheist; he was not in love with the beauty of the world in which he lived; he was fascinated by its oddity. We are getting pretty close, you

perceive, to Zola, Edmond de Goncourt, and Maupassant. You may deny that the art of Degas was literary while admitting that it was much more comprehensible to writers than that of the Impressionists proper. Easily nimble-witted contemporaries could re-translate his drawings into life and so read into them the sort of comment they themselves were making in prose and verse. That amazing study of a tired washerwoman, yawning with her hands behind her head—who is she but the outworn mother of Nana hit off in a different medium? Degas, like the writers, was a renderer of character of a precise and remorseless impartiality hitherto unknown; only, being a draughtsman, it was the characteristic bodily movement, not the mental, he pinned and exhibited. Also, to render it, instead of going round and describing as Stendhal or Proust might have done, he looked for an essential, tell-tale gesture, and dashed that down. He was a Realist after the manner of Maupassant—*le mot juste*. He observed life as it came and recorded his observations with such strength and economy that, by sheer intensity, his impression became art. For all their unexpectedness, his drawings are, we say, 'exactly like'; and they are like, not as photographs, but as brilliant similes—'the snot green sea.'

So, while the Pleinairistes were finding beauty

in everything, converting it into adorable paint by the traditional elaborations of European art, and imposing their polychromatic vision on the age, the impressionist illustrators—rightly styled 'impressionist' in that they sought to catch and realize an impression—were following rather literature and the tendency of contemporary thought. The painters, exploiting passionately the heritage of Courbet and Corot, Turner, Constable, Delacroix, and the eighteenth century, were wresting beauty from contemporary life and expressing it *en petites taches*: the Illustrators, armed by science and inspired by Japan, were saying in line and colour—especially in line[1]—the sort of things the novelists were saying in prose. Doubtless these were the recognizable children of their age and country. In 1859 Darwin had begun knocking the bottom out of the pet beliefs and consolations of post-revolutionary Europe; in 1871 France had been conquered and Paris entered by Prussians before being burnt by communists; it was the morning after the orgy of neo-Napoleonic optimism, and throughout the 'seventies and 'eighties France was disillusioned and bitter. While the Pleinairistes, unconcerned, were finding beauty in things

[1] 'Degas n'est pas assez peintre,' said Cézanne, 'il n'a pas assez de ça,' indicating the turn of the brush that gives handwriting to a picture.

hitherto reckoned ugly—trains, steamboats, omnibuses, factories, and stove-pipe hats—the Illustrators, closer far to public sentiment and the mind of the boulevards, were finding ugliness in things hitherto reckoned beautiful, *e.g.* the human form, the female form, divine. And I hardly know whether good citizens will be glad or sorry to hear that, whereas the work of these socially minded but savage critics—Degas, Lautrec, Raffaëlli, Forain—owes some, and even much, of its effect to cleverness merely, the works of those cheerful but detached and uncivic Pleinairistes are, more often than not, models of æsthetic respectability.

(*Photo: Librairie de France*)

Seurat. Chahut

SEURAT AND DIVISIONISM

SEURAT marks the beginning of the end of Impressionism, his denial of any dealings with the movement notwithstanding. A student escaped after three years' servitude from the École de Beaux Arts, he disclaimed conscious obligation to any contemporary art, professing to have arrived at his theories (sometimes called for convenience *Divisionism*) by a study of Delacroix's pictures in the light of Helmholtz's science. Notoriously he was the most upright of men, and to doubt his word would be foolish and impertinent. At the same time, to suppose that Seurat would have painted as he did had the Impressionists never existed would be to do what his enthusiastic lady-biographer has done. I need not explain what that is, because we have all read Madame Cousturier's essay in the hope of learning something new and definite about the most mysterious of nineteenth-century masters. It would be extraordinarily interesting to know what Seurat thought of the Impressionists; and to know what the Impressionists thought of him would be of the greatest importance to historians of modern painting: alas! of the life and opinions of Seurat, who died only thirty-five years ago, we still know less than we know of the life and opinions of Michelangelo.

Apparently, like Saul, Seurat set out to find an ass and discovered, or was in a fair way to discovering, a kingdom. From early days his head seems to have buzzed with pantisocratic notions, and as painting was his delight naturally he wished to put painting 'within the reach of all.' He wished to invent a completely impersonal science of expression which could be learnt as one learns to use the typewriter, and once learnt could be employed by any one to express whatever was in his or her mind. Manifestly impersonality must be the *sine qua non* of such an instrument; a typewriter on which only one person can play being of no use whatever to the masses. Now the *petites taches* of the Impressionists were not impersonal; for *petites taches* can be, and shaped by the great Impressionists were, as thoroughly saturated in and conditioned by a peculiar sensibility as ever were the lines of old-fashioned draughtsmen. The science of the Impressionists turned out to be sadly unscientific. The same cause or causes ought to produce the same effect. But had Renoir and Monet sat side by side before the same tree, or rather before those vibrations of light called 'tree' by the profane, it was to be feared the effects would have been quite distinct. One, in fact, would have been a Renoir, the other a Monet; which is con-

trary not only to the axioms of impressionist science but to sound equalitarian socialism. It is inadmissible that one man should paint better than another.

So, to stop it, Seurat eliminated the bourgeoise *petite tache* and introduced the circular and antiseptic lozenge. Let every painter have his hoard of wafers, perfect and impersonal; and let him use nothing else. Surely a disc of colour is something as mechanical as science or socialism can require. Alas! personality is a subtler and more elusive vice than Seurat at first supposed. With my own eyes have I seen Picasso so arrange on the tablecloth a few cigar-bands, a cherry-stone or two, scraps of crust, matches and cigarette-ends as to make an unmistakable—Picasso. Personality is not betrayed in brush-strokes only. This Seurat seems to have noticed. Even when for personal smears he had substituted more or less mechanical dots, remained the danger of individual taste in disposition. To meet this, his next step was so thoroughly to analyse appearance that the instructed painter should know precisely in what order, according to the invariable laws of refraction, his coloured wafers were to be applied. All would not do: a divisionist picture by Signac differed in a thousand subtle, and essential, ways from a divisionist picture by Seurat. And when

Pissarro, to the infinite credit of that open-minded and admirable painter, decided to give the new theories a trial, behold! the result was a Pissarro.

Mark this: the discrepancy was not in the conception only but in the *facture*; and it was discrepancy in *facture* that Seurat was trying to get rid of. Evidently I was not serious in suggesting that he wished all pictures to be alike. Of conception he was so far from desiring uniformity that he tried to invent an impersonal, standardized process precisely because by such means only could each individual realize his own. It is not possible always to make out just what was in his mind, but he seems to have aimed at eliminating personal sensibility to give free passage to personal ideas. In art, however, sensibility plays the part of nature—*tamen usque recurret.* Whether Seurat would have continued to seek a solution of this, his first, problem—the problem of so applying paint to canvas that no germ of personality should enter into the process—I neither know nor care greatly. In fact, what was still to spare of his terribly short life—remember, he died at the age of thirty-two—he devoted to wrestling with a problem, kindred indeed, but, as it turned out, of other importance to painters than the division and standardization of tones.

No one ever knew better than Seurat that colour is not enough. Design is the very bone and muscle of a work of art. What of design then? Was it not necessary that the future race of proletarian expressionists should have not colours only but forms as well provided? Seurat, who had already determined scientifically the proper relation of colour to colour, must now determine, on purest geometrical principles, the appropriate relation of form to form. Well, in the first place, the given forms to be manageable must be simple and regular; all accidental vagaries must go. If emotion is to be evoked by natural objects, those objects must be schematized to simple and, as far as possible, regular shapes; such shapes alone being capable of scientific manipulation. Impressionist design had been determined by the immediate sensation of the artist before the motive, by sensibility in fact. The design of Seurat, like that of Poussin or Ingres, was to be matter of intelligent calculation. Without more ado the higgledy-piggledy, naturalistic forms of the Impressionists were to be reduced to neat, schematic shapes which could be handled methodically. Thus did Seurat reaffirm to the astonished 'eighties' the doctrine of simplification; and thus did he become a prophet of the new school. For now we begin to hear tell of cones, cubes, and

cylinders, of planes and directions, of right-angles and spheres, terms of which the mere sound, whether we like it or not, transports us straightway six hundred miles from Paris to a town in Provence where, unscientifically, unintellectually, and certainly without the smallest philanthropic preoccupation, a greater than Seurat instinctively was making like experiments, was attempting—and not in vain—with 'sphere, cone, and cylinder,' with schematized form and hieratic movement, to 'faire de l'Impressionnisme quelque chose de solide et de durable comme l'art des Musées.' Unknown to each other, Seurat and Cézanne were collaborating to raise from the ruins of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism.

Of course all this benevolent but ill-founded philosophy, though historically of great importance, æsthetically was of none: Seurat may have imagined that he was laying the foundations of a universal proletarian art, in fact he was trying to justify the ways of Seurat to Seurat. From *La Baignade* (1883) to *Le Cirque* (1891) his advance towards a more abstract and perfectly unified design is traceable. For instance, in *La Baignade* there are still indications of muscles, and I have seen a study for one of the seated figures wherein the muscles are fully and very beautifully rendered; and if in such a picture as *Chahut*

(1890) he has reduced muscles to their simplest geometrical equivalents that is not because he could not draw muscles with the best —or worst, but because by eliminating details he sought to give his design an easily apprehended intensity which would have been lost in a multiplicity of complicated forms. Seurat was by temperament grave and methodical, and the turmoil and high spirits of Impressionism may be supposed to have pained him; at any rate to his compositions he gave a solemn, hieratic air slightly reminiscent of Byzantine mosaics. Think of the processional movement of those figures, those cylinders, in *La Grande-Jatte*: here is an art nearer to architecture than to painting as understood and practised in 1886. If it be true, and perhaps it is true, that the art of the Impressionists approximates to music, it is amongst the lyrical melodies of Mozart and Schubert that we shall seek its affinities. The art of Seurat will be nearer to Bach. But, indeed, to me Seurat's art is not suggestive of music at all, or if at all, only because Greek architecture also is suggestive of a solemn music.

To the impressive dignity of his design, obtained by a rigorous simplification, and justified by theory, Seurat added a prodigious intensity of light, likewise justified on scientific and benevolent principles and obtained by

technical audacities. But—let there be no mistake about this—his technical innovations, in the last analysis, are found to be the fruit not of theory but of temperament. Few painters can have felt more passionately than Seurat; none perhaps has compressed his feelings more pitilessly. Every twist he gave the vice meant, at the first pang, the sacrifice of some charming quality; but every sacrifice was rewarded in the end by added intensity. Turn from his grand hieratic compositions to his studies of sea and shore at Grandcamp and Honfleur: all the familiar charm of sand and water has been squeezed out, but in exchange we are offered subtleties of tone—or rather of relations of tones—which I think I am right in saying had never before been rendered. No wonder his pictures disconcert at first sight; it is only at second or third that the attentive amateur may be heard to exclaim 'Why, he makes one feel the depth of the water and the nature of the bottom.' 'These pictures—I have heard an incredulous spectator say it—'are more real than reality.' What he meant was that they made him see more subtly and consequently feel more intensely. By the remorseless suppression of all those enchanting harmonies by which the Impressionists ravished and still ravish us, Seurat has contrived to reveal relations, to touch chords, I

will not say more moving, but rarer and more acute.

That Seurat's strange, exasperated technique served him well I cannot doubt. It kept his faculties constantly on the strain—the strain under which they prematurely snapped, but which alone could supply the power essential to an art so intense and taut as his. Whether, had he lived, he might have modified or abandoned it is an interesting but idle speculation. Only of one thing am I sure: never would he have abandoned or modified his ideal —I do not mean his pantisocratic whims, but his determination to discover and express the rarest, subtlest, most hardly won harmonies of form and colour. Only if he could have invented some other means of achieving this end would he have abandoned his disconcerting and laborious system. Had he lived another fifteen years, two things of consequence must have happened: he must have become familiar with the work of Cézanne; by the new, post-impressionist, generation he must have been acclaimed master. The young would have seen in him a great painter of the older generation who had insisted always on the importance of design and on simplification as a means to design. As designer and simplifier they would have admired him, and as a pioneer reverenced; but it is inconceivable

that they should have shared or sympathized with his preoccupation with the scientific representation of light—a preoccupation of which they denied the importance, against which, in fact, they were in violent revolt. So, had he lived another fifteen years and become familiar with the work of Cézanne; had he with Cézanne been installed co-chief of the movement; to what extent would Seurat —even then only forty-seven years old—have influenced the new age? Also, to what extent would the new age have influenced him? I leave my readers to ponder the question, merely recording the fact that already, besides having helped to lay the foundations of Post-Impressionism, Seurat had produced work of a quality to entitle him to a high place amongst the masters of the century.

(*Photo: Librairie de France*)

Monet. St. Lazare

THE END OF IMPRESSIONISM

IF Seurat, who was often described as a Neo-Impressionist, is, with his dots and divisions, of the old century, Cézanne, with his volumes and Neo-Classicism, belongs—though he died in 1906—to the new. The historian of the contemporary movement cannot possibly leave him out, nor should he leave out Seurat: nevertheless, Seurat has been left out before now. As for Van Gogh, who died in 1890, and Gauguin, who lived till 1903, both belong to the new age and are so regarded by the critics almost without exception. They are not so much landmarks in nineteenth-century painting as points of departure for twentieth. And a surveyor who has chosen for his territory nineteenth-century painting, and by nineteenth century means from the beginning of Davidism to the end of Impressionism, will bring them on to his sheet only as the names of extraneous towns are brought into the margins of maps to indicate directions.

The importance of Van Gogh was not generally appreciated before the turn of the century: then, for a dozen years his pictures were grossly overrated: to-day they are underrated perhaps. Van Gogh was an interesting and exciting artist, and emphatically not a great one. He possessed an adorable painting gift and

the temperament of a street-corner preacher. Like the little girl with a curl in the middle of her forehead, when he was good he was very, very good, and when he was not he was horrid. He was horrid when the preacher butted in. Unluckily the preacher was rarely ousted ; for, like Leonardo, he held that 'la pittura è cosa mentale'—which came to much the same thing in his case as 'sentimentale.' Also, it was this conviction of his far more than his impetuous style of expressing it that helped to break up Impressionism and inspire the rising generation. The young, says M. Maurice Denis, 'admirent son attitude agressive en face de la nature, sa vision anormale, exaspérée, mais vraiment lyrique . . . l'insistance avec laquelle il affirme les mouvements les plus capricieux de sa sensibilité . . . le mot de tempérament avec tout ce qu'il comporte de bestialité conserve son prestige. Van Gogh, enfin, a déterminé chez les jeunes une rechute de romantisme.' And even to-day what Expressionism does not owe to the original sloppiness and obfuscation of human nature, or to Picasso, it owes to Van Gogh.

Gauguin, like Van Gogh, went quite unrecognized at first, was overvalued at the beginning of the century,[1] and now is unduly

[1] M. Maurice Denis, writing in 1905, calls him 'Ce grand maître . . . dont les collectionneurs se disputent fiévreusement les tableaux' ; and goes on to say that

despised. He substituted a local colour appropriate to each particular form for the atmospheric tones, arrived at by an analysis of light, of the older generation : so, at least, his innovation might be stated technically by a painter. Any one could see that he simplified forms and coloured them with flat tones ; thereby, according to the new generation, imposing a style on the disorderly sensations of the Naturalists. The result was, or appeared to be, flat, well-organized patterns, very beautiful sometimes, and reminding one slightly of tapestry. Above all, he struck the young—and not the young painters only, or chiefly perhaps—as a bold, enterprising fellow who, while others were talking and plotting in the cafés, had shaken the dust of an outworn civilization off his feet and gone to live nobly with savages on the other side of the world. Gauguin was admired as a thorough-going revolutionary. Also, unlike Van Gogh, he was definitely anti-impressionist.

Meanwhile Maurice Denis, an uninteresting painter with an interesting mind, was moving towards a conscious, indeed a studied, archaism ;

' Depuis Manet, il est le peintre français qui eut la plus grande influence. Ce que fut Manet pour la génération de 1870, Gauguin le fut pour celle de 1890.' ' Cézanne,' he adds, ' plus rare, plus parfait, et aussi plus inaccessible, l'initiateur d'ailleurs de Paul Gauguin, n'eut son tour d'influence qu'après celui-ci.' (*Théories*, p. 199.)

and, what was much more important, explaining with admirable lucidity what he and his friends were about.[1] Maurice Denis is one of those curious but not very uncommon figures, who, like Elsheimer, Bowles, or Davenant, themselves insignificant artists, have had an important effect on their betters. About 1890 he, with Sérusier, Anquetin, Bernard, and others, founded the school called 'symbolist.'[2] The name, as

[1] M. Denis' essays and articles, collected and published by Rouart and Watelin under the title *Théories*, compose a work of capital importance to whomsoever would understand the origins of the modern movement. The book came into my hands—I confess it to my shame—only as I was writing this last essay. Had I read it earlier I do not suppose I should have modified anything that I have ever written, but certainly I should have added something. As it is, the book merely confirms my already firmly held conviction, that there is nothing new under the sun—not even one's own most striking ideas.

[2] Bonnard and Vuillard, two of the best painters alive, were sometimes improperly called Symbolists. They have also been called 'Intimists'—a foolish word emanating from Munich I believe. If it corresponds with anything at all, it corresponds with what is least important in their art—the subject. The fact is, these two fine artists, starting from an intellectual sympathy with the live movement of their youth—which Symbolism undoubtedly was—have developed so exclusively along personal lines that at present they can be attached to no school at all. They have never felt the necessity, it seems, of pertaining to a sect or adhering to a doctrine. But if *la recherche de la paternité* be absolutely obligatory, I should call them descendants of the Impressionists—though even then they are only collateral descendants.

most school names are and should be, was almost meaningless; but the existence of the eponymous school of poetry seemed to give it plausibility. Gauguin and Van Gogh were at once hailed its masters, and Cézanne the master of masters. Sérusier was the theorist; Denis the propagandist; and from the German, religious school of Beuron were imported a dose of crack-brained philosophy and much sound archæology. The Symbolists disseminated a taste for primitive art—especially for the Christian Primitives; from Beuron they learnt to admire the Egyptians and the early Greeks; Gauguin told them about the savages and the *images d'Épinal*. Contemporary taste, you perceive, owes a good deal to the Symbolists. Maurice Denis took a definite stand, not so much against Impressionism—not at all against the great impressionist masters—but against Naturalism. He called himself a Neo-Traditionalist and laid down the doctrine of equivalents which was the basis of Symbolism:—The business of an artist is not to copy nature but to find a plastic equivalent for his emotions. He added acutely that the difference between 'mystical art' and 'symbolist art' ('art,' he might have said, *tout court*) is that mystical art seeks expression in subject and symbolist in form. It is regrettable that while preaching the latter he has practised the former—*video meliora*

proboque deteriora sequor. But that is not to my purpose. The thing to bear in mind is that, in that famous symbolist manifesto of his, published when he was barely twenty by *Art et Critique*, he lays down—indeed he opens with—this profession of faith :

> 'Se rappeler qu'un tableau—avant d'être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue, ou une quelconque anecdote—est essentiellement une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées.'

Now this is Post-Impressionism.

The Symbolists distinguished themselves, on the one hand from the Impressionists, with their Pleinairisme and spontaneity, on the other from the Neo-Impressionists—Seurat, Signac, Cross, Angrand, Van Rysselberghe—with their cry for more, and more accurate, science. And thus, as early as 1890, tendencies hostile to Impressionism were actively at work. On the conceptual side there was a demand for more thought ; on the technical, for simplification and more conscious design. Yet it would be absurd to say that Impressionism was killed by its enemies. Impressionism died of old age as all live things must. The men to whom it had come as a revelation, who had used it passionately and elaborated it sincerely, were growing old ; and a generation was arising which must

either use Impressionism as the students at the Beaux Arts used the tradition of Ingres or invent something new. The last great French Impressionists are the first. With Claude Monet (who when I wrote these lines was still living), Renoir (who, however, before the turn of the century had ceased to be an Impressionist), and Degas, the central movement ends. All these have died within the last eight years; but since 1885 no French painter of talent has become an Impressionist. Certainly there was a second generation, or, rather, a second crop: in a sense Toulouse-Lautrec was the descendant of Degas; in another the mediocre Carrière belongs to the movement. But this second crop consisted of contemporaries who followed tardily the lead of the founders or of men only by a little their juniors—pupils rather than descendants. Lebourg, Le Sidanier, J. W. Morrice, Conder, Sickert, and Steer may be considered as of this second brood: you note the prevalence of English names. Typically, Impressionism became a more or less live movement—an exciting issue at all events—in this 'nook-shotten isle' about the time that it was moribund on the Continent. In France the movement had exhausted its young vigour by 1890; about the same time it became a newish thing in London and new English critics fought earnestly the battle of new English artists. Of these artists

two, standing out from the ruck, are entitled to a little place in the history of nineteenth-century painting. Wilson Steer, on his mother-country's side the descendant of Constable and Gainsborough, is also the legitimate child of Pleinairisme. Walter Sickert, a more complicated figure, who owes something to the English tradition and pretends to owe more than he does, is generally reckoned the descendant of Whistler —to whom in my opinion he is definitely superior—and in fact owes most of what is not peculiar to himself to the master of impressionist illustration — Degas. These two sound provincial masters, Sickert and Steer, may well turn out to be the last reputable exponents of a great tradition.

Over the disreputable end why linger? For some twenty years from 1890 the Impressionist method was the current coin in which every dauber paid his way. No official exhibition was complete without its complement of *petites taches*: everywhere violet and orange abounded. Henri-Martin, Desvallières, Ernest-Laurent, Aman Jean, du Gardier, Maufra, Moret, Loiseau . . . the list would stretch out to the crack of doom. These used Impressionism simply because Impressionism was an instrument ready-made and ready to hand, and acceptable to the purchasing public, by means of which they could do all they had to do—tell little stories,

to wit, or fabricate knick-knacks. Besides, they would ginger it up ; thus giving themselves an air of originality. Instead of painting women and flowers as that back-number Renoir continued to do, up-to-date M. Besnard would represent *Electricity* or *The Wonders of Science*, or just *Death*. Henri-Martin would make Impressionism decorative ; Laurens would make it descriptive in the high Roman fashion. Old ingredients were raked up and stirred into the pot by these men who could originate nothing: a little Whistlerism it was found would go a long way towards giving a distinguished air to a vulgar picture, and the Japanese flavouring became more and more popular. It was ever thus : the way of a commercial hack with the dead body of a great movement will hardly surprise a critic. Also, the cultivated public was, as ever, enchanted. That public had just grown used to the taste of an impressionist picture ; and here were painters serving up the familiar with a spice of novelty. What could be more appetizing ? And why on earth could not those disagreeable young fools, *les Fauves*, do likewise ? Will the cultivated public never understand that genuine artists cannot be content to repeat, and bowdlerize, what other artists have expressed, that they must express what they feel, which is not as a rule what their fathers felt. And if the new generation did fail,

for a while, to appreciate its predecessor, there is nothing to surprise or shock us in that. A new generation asserts itself by reacting against the old. Anyhow, it was far better to abuse the Impressionists than to imitate them. The imitators I had supposed were long since dead and done with, when, this very day,[1] came news that Besnard was not only living but about to become immortal. And that too is as it should be. What better than the reception of M. Albert Besnard by the Académie Française could mark the end of Impressionism ?

[1] June 1926.

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